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Haunt me then!

Haunted Houses as a spatial metaphor for female 'madness' and 'queerness'

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Abstract

The stigmatization of female ‘queerness’ and ‘madness’ extends to television in that female characters who are labeled ‘mad’ or ‘queer’ are portrayed in a stereotypical and villainized manner. *The Haunting of* is one of the first horror television series to subvert expectations of female protagonists who can be categorized as mentally ill and ‘queer’ and portray them in a non-stigmatized manner.

This research paper aims to discover how filming techniques, color use and framing conceptualize the haunted house as an extension of the protagonist’s mind. It is my thesis that the haunting of Hill House and Bly Manor becomes a visual manifestation and thus a proxy of the protagonists’ fears. A review of secondary literature on the topic of the trope of the haunted house, Othering, abjection and the uncanny as well as the portrayal of female ‘madness’ and ‘queerness’ in contemporary television serves as a basis for the close reading of the two primary texts.

In order to make visible the abjection of female characters who identify as queer or are mentally ill, director Mike Flanagan uses the trope of the haunted house as a spatial manifestation of the psyche of its respective female protagonists and in that creates a new type of haunted house not yet described in secondary literature.

1 Introduction

"A house is like a person's body. The walls are like bones, the pipes are veins, it needs to breathe, it needs light and flow, and it all works together to keep us safe and healthy inside." (HH E2, 5:01). This quote by Olivia Crain illustrates how the American Gothic trope of the haunted house can be interpreted as a manifestation of the human psyche. As Liggins (3) writes, the haunting of a house is closely connected to that which Freud terms 'the uncanny'. It may appear as something deliberately kept out of sight or something revealed that had been hidden as is the case for the two issues featured in the primary texts. The TV series *The Haunting of*, produced by *Netflix* in 2018-2020, is based on an anthological concept similar to *American Horror Story*, with one narrative and one haunted house per season with the first being Hill House and the second being Bly Manor. As both seasons focus on a female protagonist, this thesis examines how the female protagonists are bound to the haunted houses as well as how taboo topics such as female 'madness' and 'queerness' are portrayed in horror television series. The *The Haunting of* series provides a unique perspective to analyze how contemporary television re-imagines the American Gothic trope of the haunted house to portray what is hidden from American society such as othered femininity in the form of 'madness' and 'queerness'.

My thesis is that the *The Haunting of* series uses the trope of the haunted house as a spatial manifestation of the psyche of its respective female protagonists to make visible the abjection of female 'madness' and 'queerness'. The house itself can be interpreted as an extension of the female protagonist's mind, as the haunting becomes the visual manifestation of the issue the characters try to repress: Olivia Crain and Danielle Clayton are haunted by the ghosts of their own repression of either 'madness' or 'queerness'. Thus, *The Haunting of* uses the haunted house as the spatial extension of the protagonists and the haunting as a proxy of repressed feelings which are alleviated during the respective finale via acceptance from other characters and themselves. The TV show uses horror narratives to portray society's view on female 'madness' and 'queerness' in the form of a haunting. The haunting is lifted once the characters become aware of their repressed feelings and find acceptance within themselves and others.

The theory component of this thesis will center around Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection and Sigmund Freud's notion of the uncanny which will function as key aspects for the close reading of the primary texts. While the premise of the series is that of a ghost story, I argue that in its attempt at providing commentary to the visibility of taboo topics on screen, the series subverts the rules of the horror genre to introduce a new reading of the narrative. It is my understanding that the hauntings of Bly Manor and Hill House are connected to the houses'

inhabitants. In that, the ghosts are not spiritual apparitions but visualizations of the female protagonist's fears. In taking the shape of ghosts, these fears appear as antagonists on-screen who relay the protagonist's fear to the audience. In Olivia's case, her fear of her children being in danger manifests in the ghost of Poppy Hill who convinces Olivia that her fears are valid and that she should save her children by killing them. Danielle's fears of her own sexuality manifest in the ghosts of Bly, with Viola Lloyd appearing as Danielle's other. I suggest that theses ghosts represent what the protagonists abject about themselves which is the basis for the ghosts to be able induce fear. Once confronted with the parts of themselves the protagonists refuse to acknowledge, the ghosts appear more menacing.

As both seasons take place in a house and feature a female protagonist, the house as the domestic sphere and the connotation associated with that concept will be evaluated in chapter 2.2. Furthermore, the appearance of 'queer' or 'mad' female characters is frequently read as uncanny because they disrupt that which society determines as 'the norm' for women. In making visible their issues of 'madness' and 'queerness', the series challenges norms about female characters. As the house corresponds to and is an extension of the protagonist, the house a space of abandonment, isolation and fear becomes uncanny as it deviates from the homely sphere women supposedly create. The review of the depiction of female 'madness' and 'queerness' in contemporary TV shows provides a basis for a comparison with the *The Haunting of* series to examine how the portrayal in *The Haunting of* converges with or diverges from these previous depictions. I will focus my review of the primary texts on physical appearance as well as wardrobe. For example, the monstrous mother archetype and the toxic obsessed lesbian will be featured in terms of their portrayal, their character design and costuming. The aim of this chapter is to provide an understanding of how female characters are frequently portrayed in order to allow me to evaluate in the analysis section how *The Haunting of* deviates from these previous notions of female 'madness' and 'queerness'. To illustrate, examples taken from horror films and shows will be discussed.

In order to assess how the seasons depict their respective issues, with Bly Manor featuring 'queerness' and Hill House depicting 'madness', the trope of the haunted house will be discussed in chapter 2.3. First, I will attempt to define the haunted house tale and the house's purpose within the narrative. In a second step, I will detail the progression from castle to house. It is my understanding that the emergence of the haunted house trope during the Victorian era and its increase in popularity once film became a viable medium for adaptation, correlate with a distinctive change in setting. As I will continue to argue, the shift from Victorian to contemporary society marked a shift in housing as well, thus causing the setting of haunted

house narratives to adapt accordingly. Section 2.3.4 accounts for the specific characteristics of the haunted house in film. The subsequent section will introduce theoretical input excerpted from secondary literature discussing the haunted house as a metaphor. This section will be focal to the analysis as it details what I propose to be the main purpose of Hill House and Bly Manor within their respective narratives: to mirror their protagonists' inner mindscape. Lastly, in the section *Bodies of the Past,* I aim to categorize the haunted houses previously introduced according to their narratives.

Chapter 3, the analysis of the primary texts, will focus on filming and narrative techniques as well as dialogue, the use of colors and the layout of the respective house. To illustrate, while there are rooms at Bly Manor that are closed off, the Crains may not enter rooms at Hill House because they are hidden. The implication is clear: Danielle's refusal to accept parts of herself are visualized in Bly Manor's forbidden wing. In contrast, due to Olivia's mental illness remaining a taboo topic in her family and in her own mind, the hidden rooms are discovered gradually the more overt her mental state becomes. In addition, I will discuss the ghosts as the manifestation of repressed feelings as well as the implications of a language of taboo being the cause of these fears to fester further.

Section 4 will review the most significant conclusions drawn from the close reading. In particular, the haunted house as a trope will be re-evaluated in terms of its characterization and categorization. I will argue that, on the basis of the analysis, the *The Haunting of* series introduces a new type of haunted house which embodies the fears of the protagonists and changes its shape accordingly. In this section, I will also evaluate the potential of the *The Haunting of* series to show taboo topics such as female 'madness' and 'queerness' on screen in order to change the discourse on so-called 'madwomen'[1].

[1] As an addendum, it should be noted that this thesis will not focus on the primary texts being adaptations of the works by Henry James and Shirley Jackson. The aspect of adaption, while a relevant research topic, is not essential to the analysis of the haunted house trope as a potential commentary on taboo topics.

2 Background

The following section will review essential secondary texts in terms of theoretical aspects that will be the basis for the analysis of the primary texts. First, the main theoretical component of this paper will be introduced. Second, previous portrayals of female 'madness' and 'queerness' in contemporary horror TV shows will be evaluated. Third, the haunted house as a trope of the American Gothic will be discussed.

2.1 Theory: The Abject, the Uncanny & the Other

The abject, as Kristeva defines it, relates to a pre-Oedipal split of the self that occurs on the precipice of self-awareness and the formation of an individual's identity. The abject opposes the object and that which is defined as the I. Both abject and object remain in a relationship and are unable to separate entirely so that the abject may only exist with relation to the object (Kristeva 1).

Abjection, according to Kristeva, describes the violent separation from that which is not yet formed as the I. This process is defined by rejection and repression. At its center, the abject "disturbs identity, system, order" (Kristeva 4). Hogle describes the process as the creation of "illusions of an 'other', down-cast location or entity (the 'abject') where such anomalous conditions appear entirely outside (and can, from that otherness, haunt) their projectors (us)" (138). Hogle further states that abjection is the obscuring of self in which part of the I is hidden, either purposefully or subconsciously. Thus, the abject may not be a clear, figure separate of the I but rather a blurred version of the self. The goal of the I is to reach a level of wholeness that conjoins both object and abject to a subject (ibid.). The theory of abjection sees subject and object as both oppositional as well as identities of themselves. Body and mind are in dissonance which may cause trauma for the individual. As Hughes writes:

> The body, as it were, is constantly engaged in abjecting–that is, repelling–substances from out of its illusory wholeness. Yet those substances are, or have been until recently, part of the living tissue of the self and are intimately engaged in its survival or reproduction: their retention in certain circumstances, however, is traumatic, and in many cases pathologically dangerous in a literal or physiological sense (Hughes 19).

With regard to the primary text, this addendum is important as it views the abject as that which is no longer alive.

Once the I forms an identity and becomes a subject, the abject persists, emerging in situations whenever the subject is under threat of disturbance (Dohmen 768). This disturbance may appear in the form of disablement or disfiguration because, as Kristeva argues, those who are disabled present a disturbance to the status-quo in that they are perceived as that outside of

society. The abject creates and is created by boundaries (Kristeva 30). Kristeva states: "the disabled person opens a narcissistic identity wound in the person who is not disabled; he inflicts a threat of physical or psychical death, fear of collapse, and beyond that, the anxiety of seeing the very borders of the human species explode" (ibid.).

According to Dohmen, so-called contemporary Western societies fail to accept the abject as it crosses boundaries of societal norms. The disabled person, for example, is excluded for their "lack of being" (Dohmen 764) as they, through their visible otherness, challenge society's boundaries and that which is prescribed as normal. The impossibility of assimilation is a boundary the abject cannot cross (Dohmen 763-765). Horror films, in particular, use the abject for this reason, especially in the form of disfigurement or disability. Within the context of this paper, the monstrous feminine as a frequently-used other of horror films should be taken into consideration. This character moves outside of society and is rejected as non-human as it threatens the status-quo simply by existing (Creed 14). I will explore the monstrous feminine as well as female characters within the context of horror films in the subsequent chapter in more detail.

The term 'uncanny' was coined by Sigmund Freud who extracted the concept from E.T.A Hoffmann's novel *Der Sandman* (1816). Stemming from the German adjective 'unheimlich', 'uncanny' is defined by a "sense of weirdness, created when something that seemed safe and familiar suddenly becomes strange, or something that should have stayed hidden is revealed" (Crow 7). The root of the word 'unheimlich' can be traced back to 'Heim'. 'Uncanny' as the opposite to 'Heim' reverts the concept of the home as a safe space and turns it into a place of terror as it is unhomely. According to Freud, the uncanny occurs mostly in relation with déjà-vus or repetitions that appear odd (ibid.). According to Liggins, the term coined by Freud is not only relegated to mean 'unheimlich' but includes a variety of other meanings such as 'hidden', 'eerie' and 'horror' and may also extend to certain experiences such as the feeling of being directionless. Liggins sees the importance of the term in relation to the haunted house in particular in the phrase "the familiar turned strange" (Liggins 3) as the haunted house makes the safe space of the home a dangerous space, thus subverting expectations.

At the core of abjection and the uncanny is the idea of the other as that which is excluded from society. Hughes defines Othering as a mechanism of exclusion conjoined with feelings of hatred and disgust against that which is othered. The other may be feared for its potential to infiltrate what is perceived as an intact society. The fear of the other is thus similar to the fear of the abject as they both challenge the status-quo and have potential for disruption. The other itself is marked by artificiality rather than naturalness, oftentimes being described as non-

human or monstrous and deviant from God and religion (Hughes 28). Othering as strategic exclusion is evident, for example, in anti-Semitic narratives pre and during World War II as well as in narratives featuring slavery. Otherness is mostly based on binarities which are contrasted in order to make clear where the boundary of the norm lies and which aspects may hover outside of it. These binarities include but are not limited to "male/female, straight/curved, right/left, light/darkness, or good/evil" (Williams 19). The Gothic, in particular, features narratives of otherness with high frequency. As Williams states, the Gothic systematically discusses the other as it reflects the genre's characterization as frequently crossing boundaries. (ibid.). According to Horsley, horror narratives such as Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Stoker's *Dracula* (1895) have gained notoriety because of their display of otherness (Horsley 109), a statement I will discuss in terms of female otherness in the following chapter.

2.2 Context: Female 'madness' & 'queerness' in horror TV shows

According to Mulvey, as a majority of films feature the male gaze, the female is reduced to an object (58-69). Schweitzer also argues that horror films are frequently marked by a gendered binary. In this binary, female characters are portrayed as emotionally vulnerable and in need of protection. Their sensitivity allows them to sense spectral entities, monsters or ghosts. Schweitzer sees this ability as the reason for the prevalent likelihood of the female being dismissed as mentally unstable because the concept of sensitivity mostly has a negative connotation (Schweitzer 73). From this statement, I conclude that Schweitzer argues that horror films subvert positive qualities associated with female characters, such as sensitivity, in an exaggerated manner in order to twist them into the reason for the female character's mental breakdown. Once the female becomes mentally ill, she is excluded from society because her affliction is categorized as 'the other'.

In her 1975 essay, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,* Mulvey (58-69) erects a framework that uses psychoanalysis to explore the relation between mentally ill females and monstrous characters in television. Moreno (59-69) extends this framework, stating that the female who is mentally ill is viewed as outside the bounds of normalcy. She becomes a monster because she rejects standards for women prescribed by society. The defining feature of female 'madness', according to Moreno, is thus its opposition to normalcy. Similarly, 'anomaly' is the defining characteristic of that which is considered monstrous. According to Gerrad et al. (59-60), portrayals of mentally ill women feature a state of dishevelment or even disfigurement. This technique makes the character's disarrangement of the mind visible and emphasizes her otherness in that she is different from 'normal' and 'sane' female characters. The diverging

physical appearance of ‘sane’ and mentally ill female characters influences the audience’s response in that ‘sane’ characters are more frequently classified as ‘good’ and mentally ill characters as ‘bad’ (ibid.).

Mulvey also claims that the trope of the female being more susceptible to ghosts is frequently featured in horror films. This statement is supported by scholars such as Williams who “claims that these two objects of cinematic spectacle—the woman and the monster—have a similar status within patriarchal structures of seeing” (Williams 20). Pandzic elaborates that the monster and the female are not only similar in their ability to see but also in being seen by others. As an example, Pandzic introduces the *Insidious* films (2010-2023) in which, as is Pandzic’s claim, the monster is the embodiment of the female’s fear. The female and the monster share their being ostracized by society. The anxiety as a result of this Othering may be the cause for her mental breakdown and her subsequent transformation into the monster which makes her an abject of her former self. Pandzic further proposes that this female abject becomes a threat to men in three stages: in showing the image of the abjection; in drawing clear borders and making a point of crossing them in order to show the destabilization of the system; in making not only female but also maternal figures the abject as the epitome of the monstrous female (Pandzic 1-4). Lukancic also comments on mothers as monsters, terming these characters “amoral primeval mother” (Lukancic 36) who appear, for example, in *Aliens* (1986) or *The Hunger* (1983).

Similarly to female ‘madness’, female ‘queerness’ is frequently depicted as monstrous, as ‘queerness’, according to Benson, indicates that the protagonists tests and oversteps societal and cultural boundaries. A sexual identity which does not confirm heteronormative standards may be regarded by both the audience as well as the characters within the narrative as the breaking of rules (Benson 11-21). Schneider supports this argumentation, taking a post-structural psychoanalytical approach in stating that horror films center on “a patriarchal fear of female sexuality” (Schneider 3). Female sexuality in itself, according to Schneider, is not heteronormative and viewed as an abnormity and thus fear-inducing to the audience (ibid.). While Schneider does not explicitly comment on homosexuality or ‘queerness’, his argument lends weight to Benson’s claim that female ‘queerness’ is portrayed as monstrous in horror films as it breaks with cultural norms (Benson 11-21).

On the basis of the observations of the scholars above, I argue that horror films use the apparent lack of femininity to emphasize that queer women break cultural norms and thus portray them as fear-inducing. Century’s article *Vampires, Psychics, and Ghosts: A Look at Queer Women in Horror* (2015) supports this argumentation in using a popular-culture-centric

approach to the topic. First, she argues that queer females entered popular culture by ways of the horror film. The first film to feature a lesbian woman was *Dracula's Daughter* in 1936. The main character, a vampiric countess, is introduced as a female equivalent to Count Dracula, who relies on seduction and temptation to lure her female victims to their deaths. According to Century, this character became the stereotype of queer female villains on screen as during the 20th century, queer women were predominantly portrayed as lesbian vampires, and thus villains. The period from 1940 to 1960 saw an increase of the 'evil-lesbian' trope which, Century argues, influenced how society viewed lesbian women and created negative stigma about female 'queerness'. In 2003, the film *High Tension* was released, still featuring the evil-lesbian trope., This film portrays same-sex attraction as a hyper fixation of the queer character on her heterosexual friend, constituting another negative, fear-inducing portrayal of female 'queerness' and creating an apparent link between non-heteronormative sexuality and violence. In contemporary horror films, the 'innocent-lesbian' trope has risen in popularity. As Century states, in this trope a queer female is brutalized and killed which Century reads as "the angelic queer woman who is punished quite literally to death for her sexuality" (Century para. 17), an example being *Here Comes the Devil* (2012).

Elledge, in contrast, states that sexual identities within the LGBTQIA+ spectrum have infrequently been represented on screen until 1990. In the few cases non-heteronormative sexualities appeared on television, the representation was based on stereotypes and misconceptions of gender and sexuality. With regard to queer females, the on-screen representatives may be portrayed as violent and unstable. In addition, female characters that are queer-connotated oftentimes have certain physical attributes such as a broad frame, short hair, tattoos or piercings and their wardrobe may more closely resemble clothes that are male-connotated, according to Elledge (vol.1, 48-51).

A feminist reading of horror films featuring queer female characters sees the introduction of 'queerness' as a challenge to and rejection of patriarchal norms. In creating queer narratives and allowing queer characters to be seen, the audience is asked to reevaluate their understanding of heterosexuality as the inherent norm. An early example of how a queer-coded monstrous woman subverts preexisting notions of female 'queerness', especially in terms of appearance, is the 2009 film *Jennifer's Body*. The film follows Jennifer's journey as she becomes "the monstrous feminine [who is] not altogether human, she is something else that emerges after her journey into the dark night of abjection" (Creed 113).

As is evident from the aforementioned examples of female 'queerness' in horror films, queer female characters have most frequently been portrayed as the villain, with *Jennifer's*

Body being an exception. In terms of protagonists, I argue that, on the basis of the literature review, female 'queerness' in horror films serves as a fear-inducing element rather than the characters being vital to the plot without being vilified. One focal point of the analysis of *The Haunting of Bly Manor* will be to assess, how it positions its queer female protagonist.

2.3 Trope: The Haunted House in the American Gothic

In general, the term 'Gothic' refers to an architectural epoch and style which prominently features pointed arches. Not incidentally, the literary genre of the Gothic was influenced by this style and predominantly features hidden rooms, churches, graveyards and castles. Elements of the grotesque are employed in both genre and architectural epoch and are expressed in the display of disfigurement or deformity (Ellis 7-13).

Llyod-Smith presents a narrower approach to define the Gothic as a literary genre. According to him, the Gothic period lasted from 1764 to 1824, with Gothic revivals occurring in the Georgian age. The use of the uncanny and the grotesque is most prevalent to the Gothic as they evoke feelings of fear which is the most distinctive mark of Gothic narratives. Characteristic elements of the genre include a male perpetrator chasing the female character through a labyrinth and a villain of aristocratic descend in pursuit of the innocent female. Additionally, Llyod-Smith states that the Gothic displays excess and plays with extremes such as passion and fear. Due to this characteristic, he attributes the genre a potential for sensationalism. The exploration of extremes may extend to religion, Satanism, the occult, necromancy, incest and demonism as well as psychological trauma. Llyod-Smith summarizes: "the Gothic situates itself in liminal spaces between opposing individuals, but subsequently appearing more and more as divisions between opposing aspects within the self" (Llyod-Smith 6).

Edwards observes an expansion of the Gothic genre which is marked by an intrusion of the monstrous into the private sphere of the home. These monstrous beings may either be zombies or vampires. In case of the zombie, Edwards argues that the rotting of flesh signals a loss of identity as the zombie progresses from human to monster (Edwards 77). Llyod-Smith also comments on this paradigm shift and states that his own narrow definition of the Gothic is in the process of transformation in that a "broader application and popular understanding […] has been used to describe texts ranging from *Wuthering Heights* (1874) to William Gibson's *Neuromancer* or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*" (Llyod-Smith 5).

The Gothic genre continued to develop into two different subgenres: the American Gothic and the British Gothic. The latter relies on the grandeur of buildings to evoke feelings

of terror (Ellis 7-13). The former term 'American Gothic' Crow defines as "oppositional literature, presenting in disturbing, usually frightening ways, a skeptical, ambiguous view of human nature and history" (Crow 2). Ellis also observes that the genre is "remarkably flexible" (Ellis 3). Crow supports this statement of the Gothic as an expanding and changing genre, stating that the genre no longer relies on certain tropes such as gothic architecture and that the American Gothic is a result of this change. In that, the American Gothic in particular centers around "the imaginative expression of the fears and forbidden desires of Americans" (Crow 1). As such, the American Gothic has been utilized as an outlet for writers to discuss taboo topics. The genre reveals what is hidden and forces the making-visual of the repressed. In addition, as Crow argues, the American Gothic provides a platform for suppressed groups to voice their discontent with their own suppression, be it in terms of race or gender. In conjunction with the abject, writers of the American Gothic balance opposing concepts such as dreaming/awake and living/dead; the genre becomes a borderland, as Crow states (Crow 1-2). Edwards, too, argues that American Gothic narratives in particular, contain "decaying bodies, spectral presences, claustrophobic spaces, and fluid movements between past and present" (Edwards, 77).

Ellis attempts to further distinguish the genre of the American Gothic as a subgenre by identifying seven characteristics which every narrative should contain that is classified as 'American Gothic'. These characteristics include a grand building such as a castle in a state of decay; an abundance of doors; murder; hidden skeletons; assassins; noises of unclear origin; a woman of old age whose throat had been cut and who had been hung (Ellis 5).

Noble also comprises a list of characteristics inherent to the American Gothic. For example, the genre, as Noble defines it, includes narratives of female characters being locked up or held captive by relatives or partners. In addition, the genre reveals that which is hidden and plays on oppositions. In that, Noble considers the American Gothic America personified as the genre insists "that this montage of simultaneous and opposed narratives [of geniality and murderous rage] characterize America itself" (Noble 170). Pham supports this argumentation and claims that the American Gothic presents uniquely American narratives that unveil the anxiety of the nation in conjunction with America's own history (Pham para. 9). Similarly, Goddu sees the potential of the American Gothic as literature that "reveals what haunts the nation's cultural narratives"[2] (Goddu 71). Goddu thus declares the genre's potential to discuss critical or sensitive topics that are considered taboo.

[2] note: The term 'culture' as it is used by the scholars this paper reviews is much more complex than is being presented. However, for this paper, the term should be considered as referring to U.S. American culture as white middle-class.

One focal characteristic of the American Gothic is the referral to and the making-visible of otherness, mostly in conjunction with the topic of slavery[3]. The trope of the haunted house is then used to convey this otherness as crimes committed in the past are the reason for the haunting. Schauer states: "the 'otherness' of the region is often employed as a metaphor for the culture" (Schauer 3). Thus, the haunting of the house reflects the haunting of the nation and in that reveals issues, such as slavery, which are deliberately ignored by society. Therefore, Schauer supports Crow and Goddu's argumentation that the American Gothic makes visible what is repressed and considered taboo in American culture and lends a voice to minorities and suppressed groups to reveal what is unspeakable. However, the American Gothic not only comments on cultural issues but is also a genre that allows for the critical discussion of individual issues. That which haunts a person, be it trauma or mental illness, for example, is made visible in American Gothic narratives (Schauer 2-3) and in the haunted house in particular.

The definition of the term 'American Gothic', however, is subject to controversy. In the 1930s, scholars argued for a merge of the terms 'Gothic' and 'American' (Monnet 1). According to Monnet, the debate on terminology resulted from the title of one of Grant Wood's paintings which depicted a woman in front of a house. The title read *American Gothic*. Wood used the term deliberately as a play on incongruity as "'American Gothic' existed only as a designation for a nineteenth-century architectural fad" (Monnet 1). The only gothic element displayed in the painting is an arched window which caused some scholars to disagree with the merge of Gothic and American (ibid.). Goddu also comments on the incongruity of merging the terms 'Gothic' and 'American' prevalent in secondary literature. According to her, "the defining characteristics of the Gothic become confused when accompanied by the modifier 'American' since in an American context the Gothic lacks the self-evident validity and qualifying imagery of its British counterpart" (Goddu 3). According to Goodu, the controversy of terminology is caused by the defining elements of the Gothic genre which, in topography and theme, are inherently British. Goddu thus claims a kind of synonymy of 'Gothic' and 'British Gothic' which stems from the British Gothic being a mere extension of the Gothic. As the British Gothic is a genre within clear constraints in terms of time, place and topics, it emulates the strict regulations in place for narratives belonging to the Gothic (Goddu 4) which Ellis (1-7) also proclaims. In contrast, the American Gothic is defined by its elusiveness and its expansion of boarders. The American Gothic is unfixed and indefinite in terms of its time

[3] Despite slavery being an essential part of narratives featuring otherness, neither primary texts discuss this topic which is the reason why I included slavery only in terms of completeness.

period. Thus, ‘American’ and ‘Gothic’ should be considered opposites and the merge of ‘American’ and ‘Gothic’ should be questioned in terms of validity. The solution Goddu presents, sees the American Gothic as an extension of the basic genre of the Gothic in terms of its use of the uncanny and grotesque that deviates from the British Gothic in that it is unrestricted and flexible. The American Gothic references conventions of the Gothic while conjuring a new genre devoid of restrictions but allowing for a definite aesthetic (Goddu 1-4). Horsley summarizes: The American Gothic marks a so-called destabilization of the genre of Gothic, breaking with formulaic plots while still using the genre’s most prevalent elements such as the haunted house (Horsley 87). Monnet further observes that the disagreement on the validity of ‘American Gothic’ as a term ended in the 1990s. The apparent oxymoron of the term is no longer palpable during that period as works such as *American Gothic Tales* (1996) by Joyce Carol Oates were published (Monnet 1).

2.3.1 What makes a Haunted House?

For a working definition of the haunted house tale, I will use Bailey’s observation that “[the haunted house tale is] a prosaic depiction of the supernatural in which the house itself is sentient and malign” (Bailey 6). In addition, Liggins considers decay an important element of the haunted house tale in terms of interior as it “invites ruin and emptiness, which become key aspects of its topography” (Liggins 45). The layout and appearance of the house are not only used to garner fear but also to further the plot as is evident, for example, in Henry James’ *The Turn of the Screw* (ibid.). Other techniques are also employed to visualize disarrangement of order such as finding objects moved to another spot or doors being opened despite having been closed before or feeling as if a presence has entered an empty room. Steven King adds that the haunted house is marked by “the cold touch in the midst of the familiar […] we like to think we’re locking trouble out. The good horror story about the Bad Place whispers that we are not locking the world out, we are locking ourselves in” (Liggins 254).

Meehan identifies a structural pattern which he states haunted house narratives generally display: At first, a haunted property is deserted and then put on the market for a family to either buy or rent. Step two of the formula sees the family exploring the root of the haunting. The inevitability of the family becoming victims of a haunting as part of a cycle of violence that repeats itself is oftentimes introduced as a plot device with the family discovering that there have been violent deaths on the property (Meehan 6). As Meehan does not provide examples, I suggest that the *Netflix* film *Things Heard and Seen* (2021) should be considered for reference. The protagonist researches the house’s history after she witnesses spiritual apparitions. In a

third step, the family, via exorcism or salvation, attempts to banish the ghost (Meehan 6). <In this context, I argue for a further distinction of spiritual apparitions between benevolent and malevolent ghosts (i. e. Poltergeists) within the context of the haunted house as they may determine the narrative's conclusion (Krayer-Hoffmann & Bächtold-Stäubli 481-482). In the analysis section of this paper, I will review whether the primary texts adhere to the pattern identified by Meehan or whether they deviate from it.

Lastly, the haunted house tale, according to Bailey, should not be viewed as a continuation of the ghost story despite the similarities shared, for example, with James' *The Turn of the Screw*, but rather as a separate subgenre of horror literature. The close personal connection of the house to the narrator is essential for this type of tale. Following Poe and Hawthorne, the distinctive tale of the haunted house emerged as a unique formula which explores the versatility of primarily American themes (Bailey 1-2). Mariconda supports this definition and views the aforementioned element of versatility as essential as: "[t]he number of variants within this definition–the house, the circumstances, and the potential physical and emotional repercussions–is limitless" (Mariconda 268). In that, Mariconda affirms that the haunted house, as a trope, is part of the American Gothic, as it, too, is limitless.

2.3.2 Crossing the Threshold

I argue that the limitlessness of the haunted house tale parallels the limitlessness of the American Gothic in that both discuss taboo topics by focusing on that which is not talked about and which fractures society. Thus, it is my hypothesis that the purpose of the haunted house is to discuss the brokenness of a nation as the haunted house functions as a miniature version of the nation and its inhabitants as stand-ins for the general population. Schauer's theory on the haunted house trope supports my hypothesis. According to Schauer, the haunted house functions as "the ideal setting for the culture of the region to interact with and influence individual identity" (Schauer 1). The building itself represents the physical manifestation of the culture surrounding it, as Schauer argues, in the form of broken exterior. However, not only the structural integrity of the building succumbing to decay is essential for this trope: The haunting makes the home as an emblem for what is hidden or repressed by society and the families living within the house. In addition, Schauer states that the trope comments on "the 'otherness' of the region" (3).

This otherness identified by Schauer is prevalent in haunted house tales in that the spaces employed are "below the normative, below consciousness, below social control; in this sense, 'below' can become 'beyond' as well" (Ellis xxx). In that observation, Ellis argues that

descriptions such as ‘below’ can refer to physical places, such as a house, and metaphorical places, such as repressed issues. Ellis summarizes:

> Don’t open that door. This remains one of the primary feelings manipulated in the viewer of horror films, just as opening that door remains the most difficult chore to give to a young child: ‘Go down in the basement and bring back—'. The underground space, that place at the bottom of the rabbit hole, need not literally be found under the floor of the house. […] The Gothic, as a genre, continually takes us out there, below ground, and behind the door we would rather leave closed. (Ellis xvi)

The phrase ‘we would rather leave closed’ refers to the Othering and subsequent exclusion of certain topics and people from society. Ellis thus argues for the haunted house tale as an exploration and making-visible of that which society terms the other. Liggins presents a similar argument, stating that the structure of the house which is characterized by either permeability or impenetrability correlates to both spatiality and metaphor. Doors and thresholds can be entered and crossed while walls mark physical and metaphorical barriers. The house itself, therefore, becomes society in that society, too, has physical and metaphorical boundaries which may only be crossed by certain people (Liggins 45).

Pandzic introduces a similar assessment of haunted houses as a place of confinement. However, according to Pandzic, the confinement is not physical but rather psychological as the house is not only a domestic but also a female sphere. The house embodies traditional gender roles in that the female is relegated to and confined within the domestic space of the home which is the “primary site of horror” (Pandzic 3). Mariconda also views the haunted house as an extension of the ‘mother archetype’ in that the home as the domestic sphere is female-connotated (Mariconda 268). I argue that Pandzic and Mariconda’s observations support Schauer’s hypothesis that American Gothic tropes make visible what is hidden and othered by culture in using a female-connotated space as the site of both physical and metaphorical horror and in that allow the female characters to break out of their confinement.

2.3.3 From Castle to House

Pham (para. 1) comments on the importance of setting in all Gothic narratives which I will examine in the following chapter. As Pham states, essential to every Gothic tale is a castle as the main place of action. However, in agreement with Edwards (77), the paradigm shift in Gothic literature also affects the setting of the narratives as the haunted castle is mostly prevalent in 18th- and 19th-century works. Pham describes this trope of the haunted castle as “a symbol of societal fears of ruination and corruption” (Pham para. 1).

I propose that the haunted house as a successor to the haunted castle emerged as a result of a shift of circumstances within society. Pettifer supports this hypothesis as he details the

transformation of landscape from castles to mansions (Pettifer 132). Liggins also argues for a spatial turn during the last decade of research on the trope of the haunted house. She summarizes Botting's observations that "the castle gradually gave way to the old house; as both building and family line" (Botting 3). The result of this turn was emergence of the so-called 'domestic uncanny', a term coined by Alexandra Warwick (37-38) which describes the transformation of the domestic space – the house – into something uncanny (Freud 15) and uninhabitable.

Crow claims that the spatial turn was caused during the development of the American landscape in-between the American Revolution and the Civil War. Previously unclaimed and unchartered land was turned into profitable landmass (Crow 17). With this development coincided the rise of the frontier narrative (Paul 11-42) as well as the apparent taming of nature accompanied by a change of American ideology. This period saw a renewed surge of prosperity aided by the installment of democratic values, a rise in opportunities for education, new technology and the expansion of the free market. The American Gothic proceeded to challenge the "celebration of progress, inquiring about its costs and the omission from society (Crow 17). One example of how the genre challenges the idea of the taming of nature as the starting point for America's prosperity is William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* (1651). The journal introduces wilderness as a concept opposed to order in a landscaped distinctly marked by its having been conquered. The wilderness is thus no longer visible or physically present but rather persists within the mind, an inner landscape of fears still unconquered within the nation and thus, "still Gothic territory" (ibid. 19). The taming of nature also implies the domestication of wilderness, or the making of a home. In that, Crow observes the development of American society from the frontier narrative to the American Dream which resulted in the house becoming a status symbol (Hochschild 223). Therefore, I argue that the haunted house as a twist of the ideal of the house as a domestic sphere of safety and prosperity can be considered a side effect to the cultural changes occurring in America following the Civil War.

Hogle also argues for a shift in setting but bases this shift on the Gothic entering the Victorian era. According to Hogle, from 1830 onwards, the haunted house had replaced the haunted castle as can be observed, for example, in *Jane Eyre* (1847) which takes place at Thornfield Hall. The narratives' central characters became increasingly upper-to-middle class. Hogle claims these early narratives allow their characters to "oscillate, as it has ever since, between sheltering otherworldly spirits of the dead still tied to the place, manifesting the psychological projections of its inhabitants" (133). In that, Hogle comments on the house as a metaphor for the mind which is more overtly evident in contemporary haunted house narratives but originated in the stories of the 1830s.

According to Pham, the abandonment of haunted castles in favor of haunted houses is intrinsically connected to American culture in which the hereditary passing of titles and status was not as relevant as it was in Europe of the 1800s, thus creating a need for a new setting for American Gothic narratives. The differences in values and focus are summarized by Pham as follows: "If the crumbling European haunted castle serves as a representation of European anxieties that the once grand has fallen into ruin and evil […], then the American gothic house serves as an inverse—a grand, fortified institution built upon a history of subjugation and other impure acts" (Pham para. 12). Bailey also argues that "the tale of the haunted house, while rooted in the European gothic tradition, has developed a distinctly American resonance" (Bailey 6). He states that the rebranding of haunted house narratives as American Gothic instead of Gothic originated in E.A. Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839). The publication marks a shift in the genre that caused the haunted house motif to become increasingly linked to American tradition (ibid.). With the emergence of the American Gothic, the European haunted castle made way for the American haunted house which is built on a foundation that is flawed. Pham, in his description of this re-worked trope, emphasizes the importance of layout in stating that "there will always be skeletons in the closet, there will always be secrets in the basement threatening to erupt and bring down the house" (Pham para. 16).

During the progression from haunted castle to haunted house, the connotations associated with the setting underwent change as well. As Pham states, the haunted house remains a site of history while abandoning the previous notion of the haunted castle as a manifestation of corruption. The haunted house foregrounds less institutional and more familiar narratives, allowing also for more introspection into the characters' inner lives. Pham uses the phrase "family *as* house" (Pham para. 6) to refer to this inward perspective, detailing that with the rise of the haunted house, the focus of the narratives shifts as well in that "we only meet [the family] in the context of the house" (Pham para. 7), thus disclosing the intertwining of family and house that characterizes more contemporary American Gothic narratives. Furthermore, Pham concludes that the house becomes an extension of the family and their individual bodies (ibid.).

Despite the difference in opinion in terms of the time period of the paradigm shift, all scholars support my hypothesis of the existence of such a shift. Furthermore, on the basis of the secondary literature I reviewed, I reiterate that the paradigm shift caused a shift in narratives and thus in setting: from castle to house.

2.3.4 A Fearscape in Film

Skal introduces the perspective that Gothic elements were most prominently featured in horror films of the 1930s but that the Gothic revival of the period in-between 1957 and 1974 saw a resurgence in Gothic elements in horror films (Skal 3-4). According to Benshoff (220), Gothic elements can range from characters who typically appear in Gothic narratives such as the vampire or settings such as the haunted house. In terms of atmosphere, American Gothic horror films base their set design on literary sources as many haunted house films are adaptions of literary works. Frequently used props in both instances are the "deserted cobwebbed mansions, creaking doors, secret passageways" (Benshoff 220).

Nakagawa analyzes American television, arguing for a surge in popularity during the 1970s. During the 1980s, the American haunted house-film established itself as a subgenre of horror films that explored mostly the intimacy of American families, lending the narrative a predominantly male voice. Prevalent to these narratives between 1970 and 1980 was the trope of the nuclear family. The films of this period enforced the nuclear family as the norm (Nakagawa 75).

Following the 1980s, however, Nakagawa observes a change in society caused by an economic collapse. Using the momentum of a re-forming of societal conditions, the second wave of feminism emerged which in turn influenced popular culture. A more female-centric focus of the narrative appears in films following the 1980s, however Nakagawa lists no examples to illustrate her point. Films of this period focused on showing the domestic sphere more frequently, according to Nakagawa. These films challenge existing power structures and deconstruct the status of the nuclear family as the norm. In that, they presented a threat to the status quo and were discussed controversially. One example that illustrates the laceration between society of the 1980s and society after that are the *Poltergeist* films of 1982 and 2015. Their difference in focus and setting depicts the shift in society as the 2015 adaption was influenced by cultural changes such as feminism (Nakagawa 77). For both films, however, the American Gothic tradition is evident, as Nakagawa states, such as elements from travelling Freak Shows. As most American Gothic horror films, Benshoff summarizes, are based on stories published in *Penny Dreadfuls*, they are "cheap serial pulp fictions, which in fact combine the 'visceral shocks of the era's freak shows' and Gothic horror" (Benshoff 212).

In terms of literary sources, *The Turn of the Screw* is one of the most popular works to provide a basis for film adaptations, according to Meehan who states that "in the cinema, the default iconography for the haunted house is the standard 'old dark house' replete with mold, cobwebs and a history of violence and 'madness' such as the houses appearing in Wuthering

Heights, House of Usher, The Woman in Black and Crimson Peak" (13). The house may be of gothic origin, as is the case for adaptions of *Dracula,* or an old manor as can be seen in *Dark Shadows* (2012), a haunted hotel as in *American Horror Story: Hotel* (2015-2016) or an apartment (*Rosemary's Baby*, 1968). Focal to all these narratives is the murder of a person or persons which marks the beginning of the haunting and the narrative's central mystery in need of discovery in order for the protagonist to resolve the haunting (Meehan 12-13).

An example of the embodiment of the stereotypical haunted house in film can be found in *The Amityville Horror* (1979), however, according to Northedge, the *Netflix* adaptations of *The Haunting of Hill House* and *The Turn of the Screw* feature typical haunted houses as well. The adaptations use the novels as the basis for a more contemporary portrayal of the American Gothic trope of the haunted house in conjunction with the 'domestic noir'. The narratives each feature a female narrator who becomes increasingly unreliable and is plagued by psychological turmoil and mental illness, be it trauma, depression or paranoia, as is Northedge's interpretation. The key aspect to both novel adaptations is the utilization of a female character whose perception is influenced by her psychological condition. As described by Northedge, Hill House, for example, appears to its inhabitants as cold, haunted and even vile. Eleanor's state of mind becomes progressively more "intertwined with that of the house" (Northedge para. 4) and she begins to view Hill House as dangerous. In a similar progression, Nell has a visceral reaction to Hill House in the *Netflix* adaptation, translating her fear to the screen. Dana Barrow in *The Disappointments Room* (2016), according to Schweitzer, is another example of how a character's perception may be influenced by the haunting of the house which is another element frequently shown in haunted house-films. In a dialogue sequence, Dana notes that no time had passed for her son while it had passed for her, implying a difference in perception (Schweitzer 83). A similar sequence can be found in *The Haunting of Hill House* with Nell exclaiming "I was here. I was right here […] and I was screaming and shouting and none of you could see me!" (HH E6, 53:22). In both cases, the characters experience the passing of time as different to other characters which alludes to a difference in perception related to the haunting.

Curtis focuses on haunted houses and their visual appearance on television, claiming that there are certain elements which pertain to haunted houses shown on-screen that are essential in order to evoke feelings of horror among the audience. This kind of haunted house is designed to encompass a space which holds the past and is functional for the present. According to Curtis, the haunted houses in film "served as powerful metaphors for persistent themes of loss, memory, retribution and confrontation with unacknowledged and unresolved histories" (Curtis ch. "souvenirs, dust and heirlooms"). Marked by generational conflict, the

haunted house in film makes use of children as liminal characters capable of negotiating between the living and the dead. In conjunction with that is the focus on what Curtis terms 'bad mothers' as the focal point of the narrative (ibid.). Schweitzer also notes that what he terms 'elusive mothers' may appear in haunted house-films. In this case, the "terror comes from the mother who does not care enough" which is showcased in *Hereditary* (2018), for example. *The Haunting of Hill House* also makes use of this prompt when Olivia scolds Nell for painting on the wall when Nell was not to blame. The timing of this scene, as it occurs early in the narrative, already indicates that Olivia can be categorized according to Schweitzer's definition as an elusive and ambivalent mother. Schweitzer also discusses Olivia's role as an elusive or bad mother in terms of her children's accusation in relation to her incapability to keep them safe. In voicing these accusations through Olivia's children, the series not only questions Olivia's capability to take care of her children but also indicates her mental instability and predicts the finale of the series. It becomes clear later on that Olivia's fears, as exposed in the hallucination sequence, are founded in reality. She poses a threat to her children and herself and thus gradually becomes the source of her own terror within the house with the hallucination sequence marking only the beginning of her descend into 'madness' (Schweitzer 79-96). I will review the implication of this classification in terms of the interpretation of the primary texts in the subsequent chapters.

According to Schweitzer, one plot device frequently used in haunted house-films is that of parenting so-called troubled children. Nell can be categorized as belonging to that category. These children may either be depicted as evil or as sensitive, sensing the spirits haunting the house (Schweitzer 80).

Lastly, Johnson identifies two additional tropes that might appear in haunted house films. The first trope is that of familicide, with the father oftentimes being the perpetrator. The other trope is that of the 'mad woman' (Johnson 522) which coincides with the primary text of this paper. An example of this trope can be found in *Things Heard and Seen.*

2.3.5 The Haunted House as a Metaphor

As I stated in the introduction of this paper, when considering the primary texts, the main trope that emerges is the (haunted) house as a metaphor for the body or the mind. To lay a foundation for the analysis of the primary texts, the following chapter will detail previous research on this trope. In literature, for example, this trope has been featured quite frequently, with a multitude of authors likening the description of the house to a person's feelings, their experiences, their body and conscious. One example on how this trope is used in literature can be found in the following excerpt of the poem *The House* (2014) by Warsan Shire:

> Mother says there are locked rooms inside all women; kitchen of lust,
> bedroom of grief, bathroom of apathy.
> Sometimes, the men – they come with keys,
> and sometimes, the men – they come with hammers […]
> The bigger my body is, the more locked rooms there are […]
> At parties I point to my body and say *This is where love comes to die. Welcome, come in, make yourself at home.* (Shire para. 1)

As is evident from the quote, the haunted house as a metaphor for the conscious of a character can be expressed in likening rooms to parts of the body or using the symbolism of the forced entry into the home with a hammer as a metaphor for violent sexual impositions. In this excerpt, the aforementioned metaphor of doors and keys as proposed by Ellis (xvi) is also evident. I will analyze the primary texts in terms of how they employ this metaphor in relation to the protagonist's issues.

The trope of the haunted house as a metaphor emerged during the Victorian age and the age of Modernism in female-centric ghost stories of the 1850s to the 1940s, according to Liggins. Essential to this trope is the transformation of a space that is domestic to a place that holds terror and is dangerous to its inhabitants. The haunting itself is connected to the female experience. The focus on female minds is evident, for example, in the appearance of a dead child (Liggins 42). As the dead child rejects society's norms for the progression of life, I argue that this element disrupts the family structure and in that makes the home unhomely. In turn, the unhomely can be read as the uncanny and that which is repulsive, disruptive and dangerous. Furthermore, as Pandzic states, the home represents a sphere of belonging that should be authentic and a place of safe self-expression. Once this sphere is contorted into a fearscape by the familiar structure becoming unstable and unsafe, the identity of each inhabitant of this space is distorted as well. As the home can also be read as an extension of the protagonists of haunted house narratives, "women's literal and artificial attachment to the home affects their identity in a rather intricate way" (Pandzic 4).

Liggins links the haunted house to the "sensation of being troubled, discomforted and trapped in the past" (Liggins 6) and awards it the status of being sentient. In that, the house can be interpreted as the physical representation of the character's mind which Liggins terms "the linking of the spectral to place and space or psychology" (Liggins 51). In particular, haunted house narratives prominently feature and discuss doors, doorknobs, thresholds and barriers, all objects that might be used as metaphors in relation to the psyche. According to Liggins, these metaphors are based on implications associated with these objects. The threshold, for example, marks a liminal space of in-between, whereas the barriers is associated with resistance. These objects may further be associated with temptations and desires, repressed feelings or trauma, as rooms stay hidden or are discovered and locked doors are opened within the narrative.

Additionally, an essential element of the haunted house is the forbidden space which represents feelings of rejection or denial (ibid. 52-117).

McDaniel reviews the literary pendant to Flanagan's *The Haunting of Bly Manor* and introduces the hypothesis that the haunting in James' *The Turn of the Screw* stems from the governess' attempt at repressing her own feelings and sexual desires. McDaniel further makes a point that pertains to the research interest I expressed in the introductory chapter of this paper. According to McDaniel, Peter Quint serves as the governess' abject which is illustrated in the novel in instances when she looks through a window and sees Quint, when she should see only herself. Furthermore, "Quint, a decidedly physical being who serves as grist for the governess' sexual release […] beings to invade the sanctuary at Bly" (McDaniel 41). He can thus be viewed as her mirror image (ibid.). While McDaniel discusses James' work, I will focus only on the *Netflix* adaption *The Haunting of Bly Manor*. In the analysis section, I will use this evaluation of McDaniel's to illustrate that the adaptation, too, uses Quint as a manifestation of Danielle's repression. However, in the *Netflix* series, the manifestation expands to include all of Bly and its ghosts instead of Quint being the only ghost Danielle sees, as is the case for James' text. Jameson also argues for this conjoining of house and psyche, arguing that James' narrative "intertwines the architecture […] of his house of fictions with its characters, more specifically the aspects of America these characters […] represent" (Jameson 316).

McDaniel also hypothesizes: At the core of the haunted house is the home as a refuge from the outside which allows the occupants to feel safe and is marked by order and comfort. In contrast, the haunted house twists these connotations so that the building may become uncomfortable and disorderly. As a trope, the haunted house may "represent[…] two things. On one hand, it may serve as a repository for unexpiated sin. On another, it may serve as a kind of psychological mirror capable of reflecting—and often preying upon—the obsession of characters within" (McDaniel 4). In relation to unexpiated sin, the characters who are impacted by the haunting may also be consumed by guilt especially in conjunction with repressed sexual desire. McDaniel observes that the haunted house as a physical building reflects the askew condition of the character's psychological state. It is important to note, that McDaniel's description of the haunted house as "an extension of us" (2) explicitly supports this paper's thesis that the haunted house may function as a spatial metaphor for a character's mind. He refers to Jackson's novel and her description of Hill House as 'put together wrong', with uneven floors and skewed angles. Because of this description, the house becomes "a psychological mirror reflective of the tortured windings of its owner's mind" (McDaniel 64).

Bailey reviews Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* and states that the text combines aspects from the works of Poe and Hawthorne as well as James and Wharton in terms of how it relays a psychological ghost story to the audience and in that implies his reading of the house as a metaphor for the characters' psychological issues. Bailey classifies Hill House as 'sentient', thus supporting McDaniel's assessment of the house as tethered to the protagonist's mind in layout and appearance. Bailey further claims that Jackson "avoids the visceral supernatural imagery we associate with such novels, instead emphasizing the interplay of personality and subtle shadings of motivation common in the psychological ghost story of the late nineteenth century" (25). The analysis of the primary texts will review whether this statement is also applicable to the *Netflix* adaptation.

2.3.6 Bodies of the Past

In reviewing the haunted house and its purpose as a trope of the American Gothic as well as a mechanism of horror, two types of narrative emerge that I suggest should be differentiated. However, it should be noted that the secondary literature on the topic, while implicitly introducing this differentiation, does not actively differentiate between these types of haunted houses, nor does it provide terms for these different categories. For this paper, however, a differentiation is essential as it pertains to my research question on which type of haunted house Flanagan uses in his series.

The first type of haunted house, I term 'bodies in the ground'. It refers to narratives in which the haunting is caused by bodies being buried in the soil beneath and surrounding the house. This kind of narrative, as far as my review allows to summarize, is exclusively set in America. Examples of this type of narrative are *AHS Coven* (2013) and *AHS Roanoke* (2016) and *Supernatural* (2005-2020). To illustrate: The sixth season of the anthology series *AHS Roanoke* introduces a mixed-race couple who buy a colonial-style house. Using flashbacks, show-creator Ryan Murphy, reveals that the house had been built on land cursed by blood sacrifices. The lost colony of Roanoke, settlers who were murdered by their leader, haunt the house and its inhabitants. This type of narrative has three essential characteristics: 1) the house is built on a murder site, 2) the inhabitants of the house are haunted by those who are buried on the grounds, 3) the ghosts are either settlers or people of color. As Noble (171) argues, American Gothic narratives reveal what is hidden which is the premise of what I argue to be American haunted house narratives: The bodies in the ground re-emerge to haunt the living as they settle on ground that was taken by force from its rightful owners. America becomes both

the haunted as well as the ghosts haunting the house as the narrative reanimates the metaphorical skeletons in the basement of America's history.

The second type of narrative, I term 'bodies in the building' as this category is linked to the history of the family inhabiting the house. The ghosts of this narrative are connected to the house's inhabitants by blood relation, shared history or appearance (i. e. remnants, doppelgangers). Examples of this type can be found in *Die Ahnfrau* (1817), *The Woman in Black* (2012) or *The Canterville Ghost* (1887). The building represents the patriarchal power structures of status and wealth prevalent in old Europe that Pham (para. 3) identifies. The violent death of a family member within the house in the past is a crucial point to these narratives. Only when the soul of the murdered family member is at peace, can the haunting be resolved. I argue that the three characteristics of this type of narrative are: 1) the house must be linked to the dead person in some way, 2) the inhabitants of the house are haunted by a person who was violently killed within the house and shares a connection with them, 3) the haunting may only be lifted by righting a wrong. In contrast to 'bodies in the ground' these narratives are mostly set in Europe. They present a conflict between honor and crime. In *Die Ahnfrau*, for example, a female member of an aristocratic family is killed within her home and proceeds to haunt and kill her own family because they were products of rape. Once she succeeds in killing the entire bloodline – despite their innocence –, she is able to rest as she erased the consequence of what had been done to her. As opposed to 'bodies in the ground', 'bodies in the building' are reduced to a personal story; they are not intended as commentary on that which haunts the nation. The narratives are haunted by individual wrongdoings of the past that are only alleviated by kindness, generosity and mercy, values that reach back to old-age narratives such as *King Arthur and The Knights of the Round Table*. To reiterate Pham's argumentation: "the crumbling European haunted castle serves as a representation of European anxieties that the once grand has fallen into ruin and evil" (Pham para. 12). Thus, 'bodies in the building' are manifestations of this anxiety.

3 *The Haunting of*

In the following section, I will analyze the two primary texts. Aspects of the analysis include filming techniques, color use, the layout of the house, use of lighting and narrative arc. To discuss each primary text in sufficient detail, chapter 3 is divided into two major sections featuring one text each.

3.1 Hill House: Ghosts of 'Madness'

"My despair was a madwoman who had been locked for years in the attic. Finally freed, she set fires. She was an animal. She would not be locked away again. *My therapist tells me to love her*, I said. *But I think I need to kill her*" (Febos ch. "The book of hours"). This quote summarizes an essential aspect of my thesis I will discuss in this section: Olivia's fear of being unable to protect her children causes her mental health to decline so that she commits suicide. The woman who had been locked in the attic, as Febos writes, corresponds with the narrative of the Red Room – and Hill House as a whole – which can be interpreted as a spatial extension of Olivia Crain. Once her 'madness' is observed by others and her mental health declines, she becomes more volatile and violent. The following analysis will illustrate how Flanagan uses the ghosts of Hill House to show Olivia's fears to visualize her internal monologue and make her struggle accessible to the audience.

3.1.1 "Keep your eyes close": Language of Avoidance

The discourse of 'madness' is frequently characterized by a language of avoidance. Scholars such as Stuart critically assess the premise of 'don't talk about it'. As society refuses 'madness' a space to be discussed in public discourse, the phrase 'don't talk about it' signals this rejection. The issue remains undisclosed and undiscussed as a result (Stuart 22-28). As I argued in section 2.2, contemporary horror television is beginning to show 'madness' as prevalent not only in evil characters but also in women in general. However, within the narrative, the language of avoidance is still employed. For example, in the first scene of the first episode of *The Haunting of Hill House* a young Hugh wakes his son Steven to carry him to safety outside of the house. When Steven asks his father the reason for his frantic behavior, Hugh's response indicates the focal issue this season of *The Haunting of Hill House* aims to showcase. In saying "you keep your eyes closed no matter what you hear. Don't open them" (E1, 34:06), Hugh disallows Steven to see what is later revealed to be his mother's mental break-down. Hugh urges him to look away to avoid seeing and perceiving his mother in that state. The implicit message of this first statement is reiterated by Hugh later on when he says "I tried to keep you kids safe and protect the memories you had of your poor mother" (E6, 50:18). Here too, Hugh encourages a language of avoidance, arguing that not talking about the issue and thus avoiding it is better than acknowledging its existence.

During a confrontation with Steven in E8, Hugh maintains his claim that the house causes Olivia's disorientation. Steven counters this argument, stating "[i]t wasn't the house. She was sick. She was sick out of her mind, and the one person, the one person that was

supposed to take care of her didn't do a goddamn thing to get her help" (E8, 15:42). Steven accuses Hugh of abandoning his mother, not only because he left her in the house but also referring to situations when Hugh ignored symptoms of her mental illness. I argue that Hugh's abandonment of Olivia is an extension of his language of avoidance in that he not only avoids her mental illness by refusing to address it but also avoids her physically in abandoning her (E8, 15:20). In his assessment, Steven makes clear that mental illness should be treated with care and that a language of taboo and avoidance is counterproductive. His accusation is congruent with recent research on the subject of mental health, as is argued, for example, by Stuart (22-28). Additionally, Hugh's opinion of the truth being more damaging to his children's psyche than a lie is one shared by a majority of society as mental illness is still considered a taboo topic due to the stigma prescribed to it by media representation (Abdullah & Brown, 934-948).

The detrimental effect Hugh's language of avoidance has on his children is revealed through Steven's monologues. Steven is the only one of the children to openly criticize Hugh's decision. For example, he states "I don't know why this family has such a hard time acknowledging mental illness. Mom, Nell, Dad's talking to himself all night" (E6, 49:08). Furthermore, he accuses Hugh of worsening the family's situation and the children's trauma as he never allowed an honest discussion of Liv's condition to occur. In stating "we're all aware of how you like to hold off information when a family member offs themselves" (E6, 30:47), Steven notes that in using language of avoidance, Hugh not only denies the children closure, he also ostracizes Olivia. She becomes that which is not talked about. Her state of mind is often alluded to but only explicitly addressed by Steven as an adult. His analysis of Olivia's mental state concludes that her behavior is caused by "sickness" (E7, 40:39) that endangers the entire family because it is inherited (E3, 40:13). Steven also urges Hugh to acknowledge that his wife was ill to prevent his children from following her example, refusing treatment because he allows them no room to address their own declining mental health. For example, Steven voices his fear of losing his siblings, saying to Luke "if you don't get your shit together, like Mom and Nell didn't get their shit together, you're gonna end up just like them, understand? Because it's in our genes" (E7, 40:39). In the subsequent episode, Steven claims that the signs of Olivia's deteriorating mental health are apparent in Nell and Luke. In his opinion, the mental illness which cost Olivia her life is genetic and was inherited by all of his siblings. Additionally, a conversation between Theodora and Olivia reveals that both are aware of Hugh's tendency to use a voidance as a coping mechanism. When Theodora asks whether Hugh knows of Olivia's so-called 'sensitivity' – a euphemism both parents use to avoid labeling her mental illness –

Olivia answers with a vague "kind of" (E3, 41:42). The following excerpt illustrates how Hugh's avoidance impacts his children, for example, triggering Steven's paranoia of meeting the same fate as his mother and his sibling:

> Our family has a disease that's never been treated, because it was easier to listen to your crazy stories about an evil house. […] The whole fucking family is on the brink of a breakdown, seeing things that aren't there, hearing things that aren't there […] And this sickness killed two of us and might kill a third tonight. That's almost half. (E8, 24:25)

Hugh's own conscience, which appears in the form of Olivia's ghost, urges him to speak up. Hugh reminding himself that "[y]our silence doesn't protect them" (E7, 54:02) marks the beginning of his attempts at being more open with his children, which ultimately results in his children being able to overcome their trauma.

The show emphasizes the importance of talking about mental illness as it shows Theodora and Shirley's discussion on how to tell Shirley's children that their aunt committed suicide. While Shirley is tempted to avoid the truth, Theodora refuses to let her. The scene encapsulates the same struggle Hugh felt when deciding what to tell his children. In showing this discussion and having Shirley tell her children the truth, she breaks the cycle of avoidance. Theodora's encouragement also illustrates the trauma Hugh's language of avoidance caused the children: "[it's] better than lying. Or saying nothing like Dad" (E3, 24:59).

Hugh is not the only inhabitant of Hill House to use the language of avoidance. Olivia also uses expressions which only vaguely allude to her being unwell. It is unclear, whether her ductus is influenced by her adopting Hugh's coping mechanism or whether she herself is unable to acknowledge her declining mental health. For example, at the beginning of the season, Olivia refers to migraines as "color storms" (E2, 36:42). When talking to Theodora, she explains that she is 'sensitive' Following one of her hallucinations, she acknowledges that she is unwell while decreasing the symptoms' severity in referring to them as dreams: "[M]y headaches are almost constant now and my dreams are so vivid. You know, these dreams that feel more real than life?" (E9, 12:18). Olivia's grandmother was afflicted by the same condition as the children which suggests that the condition is inherited. The condition manifests differently for each child: Shirley talks in her sleep, Nellie hears voices and Theodora feels cold spots all over the house (E3, 40:13). Each child thus embodies only one aspect of Olivia's condition. Olivia's hallucinations are mirrored in Nell's and Luke's affliction. The twins are shown to have inherited Olivia's imagining of the most detrimental outcome of situations such as the death of her family members (E9, 24:39/ E9, 10:41). Theodora's sensitivity to cold spots is evident in E3 (8:08). When Nellie is scared by what she identifies as a ghost, Olivia tells her "Mommy's seen things too. Sometimes, Mommy sees people here, too" (E6, 20:01). This scene, while it

appears to be a mother recognizing her daughter's ability to see ghosts, I interpret as Olivia using language of avoidance to deny her own mental illness. By admitting and accepting that both Olivia and Nell see things that are not there, Olivia makes it impossible for Nell to reach out to professional help which later on causes her to commit suicide at Hill House.

However, I argue that during the progression of Olivia's mental illness Hugh becomes increasingly incapable of avoiding the issue. In that, he begins to give voice to what he has actively banned from being acknowledged thus far (E7, 41:57). One instance of this progression is evident when Olivia almost kills Hugh while in a trance. As this occurs in a later episode, Hugh questions Olivia's state of mind and refuses to allow her to lessen the severity of the issue (E7, 42:40).

Once the impact of her wariness starts to affect her family directly, Olivia, too, acknowledges that her condition is fragile at best and volatile at worst. The realization of her steep decline in mental health is accompanied by a change in ductus. At the beginning of the show, for example, she refuses to accept that her headaches may impact her ability to take care of her children. However, following her outburst at Shirley, she starts to question her behavior (E2, 36:49). In addition, the following dialogue implies that Olivia becomes increasingly aware of her volatile state of mind: "I mean the kids are safe. It's just in my head" (E9, 27:52). Other moments of lucidness occur in E8, when Hugh recalls that Olivia herself said "without me, she'd become untethered" (9:14). When talking to Mrs. Dudley about her hallucinations, Olivia states: "These things make perfect sense as a kid. It's only when you grow up that they start to sound crazy" (E9, 7:00).

Ultimately, however, Olivia is unable to confront her fear of her own mind and descends further into mental illness. She justifies her outbursts in stating that she feels "terror at [the thought of her children] outside these walls" (E9, 27:13). During the final showdown, when she realizes she has poisoned Abigail, she experiences another brief moment of lucidness before she falls back into her hallucination. Instead of acknowledging that she killed Abigail, she uses the phrase 'waking her up' (E9, 46:56). This language of avoidance is often used by murderers who are unable to cope with their crimes. Chase Hughes, for example, terms this type of ductus 'severity softening' as it allows for the killer to reduce the impact on the victim in his or her own mind to a point where the crime appears less severe. For example, murderers will use 'hurt' instead of 'kill' to create emotional distance to their action in order to lessen their own guilt (Parker 1).

3.1.2 Blue, Green & Red: The Importance of Color

Rothstein provides a studio binder on the topic of color use in film. He states that red "is a color of extremes while blue signals isolation, […] melancholy, passivity" (Rothstein para. 1). Eisenstein's text on color use supports this categorization (Eisenstein ch. 10). *The Haunting of Hill House*, however, uses color not only to create horror and to induce certain feelings but to visually tell a narrative by way of the characters' wardrobes. I argue that the color red signals 'madness' in this context. The higher in saturation the color appears on screen, the more a character's mental health is in decline. In contrast, blue symbolizes 'saneness'. I further argue that Hugh and Olivia are intended as opposites in terms of color use, while the children oscillate between them. To illustrate, Hugh is the only character of the Crain family who is never seen to wear any shade of red; his wardrobe always centers around blue pieces. Olivia, on the other hand, wears blue, green and red throughout the series. Her wardrobe is congruent with her decline in mental health, the progression which is depicted in figure 1.

Figure 1: Robes (E5, 21:38 / E9, 22:36 / E8, 40:34)

Figure 1 shows Olivia at three significant points in time: At the beginning of the story, Olivia is clad in deep, dark blue. She is unplagued by the hallucinations that later befall her. Once she experiences migraines – which mark the beginning of her 'madness' – Olivia's robe changes to light green. It is worthy to note that this robe has a pink ribbon detail around the waist which already signals Olivia's future path. The last robe is a deep red color, signaling that Olivia has reached the point of a mental break-down. According to the series' costume designer Lynn Falconer, the red robe reflects "her transition to the Red Room" (Truffaut-Wong para. 3). Falconer also states that the fabrics she used for Olivia have a heavy velvety texture in the beginning to show her being grounded while later on, her garments become light and flowy to signal the horror of the home turning into a haunted place of danger (Long 1). Nicolaou states

that "[t]he robes represent Olivia's declining mental state" (Nicolaou 1), thus explicitly supporting my own reading of color use in the series.

In terms of Olivia's wardrobe, the penultimate episode shows a major wardrobe change. Olivia briefly becomes aware of her declining mental state and Hugh urges her to leave the house to relax and calm herself. During this exchange, and most importantly, when she leaves the house, she is seen in a blue gown. As she makes a conscious decision to step away and acknowledges her mental illness, albeit only momentarily, she experiences a last moment of lucidness which is expressed in her wearing blue (E9, 35:21).

As I argued before, Steven assumes that Olivia's 'madness' is inherited and the series ultimately does not challenge this assumption but rather supports it in its use of color. Supposing that the children all inherited aspects of Olivia's 'madness', their wardrobes in scenes where their grasp on reality is fractured reflect Olivia instead of Hugh. During the penultimate and the final episode, when the remaining four Crain children experience hallucinations inside the Red Room, all four dream sequences feature accents of red. Figure 2 shows stills from each sequence.

Figure 2: Visions (E10, 4:09 / 31:05 / 19:55 / 32:35)

Steven wears a red shirt, Theodora's partner wears red underwear, Shirley a red dress, and behind Olivia and Nell Luke sees a red door, all of which indicates closeness to Olivia and thus 'madness'. I suggest that the amount of red showing on screen is directly linked to how close the character is to a similar break-down as their mother. For example, Steven had been agitated for the entire journey to Hill House and entered it afraid for his brother and father's safety. In his Red Room vision, red is featured more prominently than in Theodora's. Theodora's Red Room shows the least amount of red because she openly addressed her trauma and sought professional help for her mental health. Shirley, as can be seen in her sequence, refuses to see the truth – she scratches out her eyes – which is the reason for her dress being completely red. Figure 3 shows a young Shirly and Nell in front of the Red Room with Shirley wearing a pink and red overall. Her wardrobe, in this moment, reflects that she, too, carries the genes Steven terms 'sick'.

Figure 3: Jumpsuit (E1, 20:01)

Lastly, Luke's mental health has been questioned throughout the series and is the most fragile. Olivia says "[y]ou've been knocking on that door. For years and years" (E10, 36:21), implying that his mental illness has been evident for a long time which is congruent with his addiction problem being a major point in the narrative. The door in question is the door to the Red Room, the physical manifestation of Olivia's 'madness' as I will later argue in more detail. The 'knocking' refers to being afflicted by mental illness as is the case for all the Crain children.

The connection between the color red and 'madness' is also indicated during Nell's funeral when her body is dressed in red, as can be seen in figure 4.

Figure 4: Funeral Dress (E6, 50:33)

Preceding the funeral, Nell dances in Hill House in a light pink nightgown (E5, 1:02:33). The gown is reminiscent of Olivia's garments and signals that Nell is the child who is affected the most by Olivia's 'madness' and closest to following her path. Thus, her wardrobe foreshadows her having inherited her mother's affliction. Once she commits suicide, Nell is dressed in red at her own funeral because she succumbed to 'madness' in the form of depression. Nell's red dress also positions her as an outsider in her own family as the remaining family members who attend the funeral all wear blue.

The funeral scene is the very first scene during which the adult Crains are all present in one room. Figure 5 shows a frame from before the funeral with Hugh foregrounded as he looks to the right of the camera at Nell's open casket and his children assembled in the background.

Figure 5: Before the Funeral (E6, 25:20)

This still encapsulates the color scheme for the entirety of the series. Hugh is seen in an all-blue outfit and his children mimic his wardrobe in style and color. For example, Shirley's blouse is reminiscent of Hugh's shirt, Luke and Steven's collars are blue as are Theodora's shirt and pants. In this frame, there is no spot of red visible. The reason for this selective color palette with only tones of yellow and blue appearing on-screen is Hugh's presence dominating both the frame and the scene. Once he arrives at the funeral home, he becomes the center of the narrative and of his children's lives; the focus shifts away from Nell and towards Hugh which can be seen in the composition of the shot above.

As I argued before, the color blue is used to show 'saneness'. The varying degrees of blue shown in the children's wardrobe with Luke and Steven wearing the least amount of blue correlates with how close the children are to experiencing the same mental break-down as their mother. Figure 6 supports this argumentation as it shows Hugh and Nell's body, with Hugh dressed entirely in blue and Nell entirely in red. This still encapsulates how the series establishes opposition by using visually opposing colors to create a dichotomy of 'sane' and 'insane'. As Nell committed suicide because of her depression, she is characterized by her wardrobe as 'insane' while Hugh symbolizes 'saneness' even when confronted by the trauma and grief of having lost his wife and daughter. The still further shows the clear, almost physical, separation of the two characters. The casket acts not only as a physical but also as a visual barrier between them, with Hugh being unable to reach his daughter due to her 'madness'. The color blocking further emphasizes the distance between those two characters.

Figure 6: Color Blocking (E6, 26:17)

That the color blue is intended to symbolize ‘saneness’ is also supported by scenes in which Hugh imagines talking to Olivia following her death. It is important to note that these scenes are not hallucinations but expressions of grief. The series establishes this difference in showing Hugh to be aware of his own coping mechanism. During these scenes, Olivia is exclusively dressed in blue garments (E7, 7:49). Her role in these moments is to support Hugh and offer him advice whenever he feels out of depth when talking to his children. In that, it is clear that she is a figment of Hugh’s imagination and symbolizes his inner conflict of being unable to communicate with his children while simultaneously wanting to talk to them.

Lastly, another character is significant in terms of costuming and color use. Figure 7 shows the side character Poppy in her signature outfit, a light blue flapper dress.

Figure 7: Poppy (E9, 16:02)

According to the show, Poppy was mentally ill. However, whenever she appears to Olivia, Olivia listens to her advice despite Olivia’s knowledge of Poppy’s ‘madness’. It is my understanding that, because Poppy is an extension of Olivia’s ‘madness’, which she refuses to acknowledge, she wears the color of the ‘sane’. Poppy’s bright red hair disrupts the illusion of ‘saneness’ Poppy tries to embody. I argue for this choice of hair color to be deliberate to signify Poppy’s ‘madness’ while she tries to appear ‘sane’. Because Olivia chooses not to acknowledge her declining mental health, Poppy appears to her in a garment reflecting ‘saneness’ while being ‘insane’, which is illustrated by her hair color that is inherited and beyond her control.

3.1.3 A Look through the Keyhole: Filming Techniques

Directing fear, as the title of the featurette following Mike Flanagan's filming process suggests, is accomplished in "the way you move the camera and what you show and what you don't show is the fundamental notion" (Netflix, *Hill House* 1:42). In this chapter I will use stills from the show to illustrate how camera work creates fear and how lighting, color and frame contribute to the narrative in *The Haunting of Hill House*.

The scene composition of *The Haunting of Hill House* evolves from saturated to non-saturated scenes. According to Chen et al. (39-57), this color palette is associated with the horror genre, but the pale filter (E6) contrasting the sepia filter (E9) alludes to descriptive terms such as 'decay' and 'death'. These items are commonly associated with the horror genre, but the correlation between 'pale' and 'death' can be found as early as *Revelation* 6, with the apocalyptic horsemen Death riding 'the pale horse' (Wright para. 4). Thus, as Chen et al. (39-57) argue, the predominant use of pale colors in horror films results from the connotation associated with terms such as 'pale' as these colors evoke feelings of fear. One example that illustrates the different connotations of colors can be seen in figure 8. This figure depicts scenes at two different points in time which illustrate how lighting and tonality can be used to set a scene. The left-hand side depicts Hill House upon arrival. The right-hand side shows a scene from E6 *Two Storms*.

Figure 8: Welcome Home (E9, 54:12 / E6, 45:53)

The image on the left is marked by its use of yellow and sepia which lend a warm tone to the scenery. This type of lighting coincides with a positive, nostalgic feeling, as is stated by Eisenstein (ch. 10). The characters are distinctive and recognizable and the light from outside illuminates the room. However, once Olivia's mental health starts to decline, the rooms take on a dark color and light. This change is especially evident in the still on the right-hand side. The image can be categorized as an inversion of the still on the left-hand side, as the light sources do not illuminate the scene but rather contribute to its overall darkness by casting shadows and reducing the characters to silhouettes. E6 narratively links two storms in different timelines

with both storms causing a blackout which makes episode 6 perpetually dark. As this episode marks the family reunion which results in conflicts, the initial lack of light corresponds with the content of the episode. In having the characters light candles, Flanagan uses the visual of the camera work as a metaphor for the theme prevalent in the episode: the revealing of secrets.

Another instance of inversion can be seen in figure 9 which also shows two stills from E6.

Figure 9: Family Photos (E6, 53:00 / 32:06)

The image on the left shows the younger version of the Crains. The lighting of this image is warm; the predominant tones are yellow and red – apart from Hugh and partially Nell. Furthermore, the camera is set at Nell's height with all the Crains being at eye-level with each other. Their physical closeness is accentuated by the use of a slightly distanced over-the-shoulder-shot (OTS), allowing the audience to be part of the scene without intruding. The image on the right, however, presents a stark contrast to that on the left, despite it taking part in the same episode. In this still, the colors are muted with only shades of blue and pale yellow visible. The still lacks saturation and the light is much darker. As I stated in chapter 3.1.2, the children all wear blue. In contrast to the first image, this shot positions the camera much closer to Hugh. However, this camera position is not used to accentuate the family's closeness but rather to emphasize distance. Not only are the children further apart than in the image on the left, they stand opposite each other instead of in a line-up. In the first image, the camera pans over Nell's shoulder, but in this image, it pans over Hugh's shoulder in an OTS. The audience is still able to look into the scene, however, this time it is clear that the audience follows Hugh in his role as an outsider looking into the family instead of following Nell as part of the family, especially considering Hugh's position a few feet apart from the rest of his family. Furthermore, Olivia is absent from this shot as she is dead and Nell, while present, can only be seen in the background of the shot. In terms of blocking, this shot allows for all the Crains – apart from Olivia – to be present within one frame due to the siblings creating a separation which allows for Nell's casket to peek through. Additionally, this shot creates emotional distance through spatial distance via blocking in that the children with whom Hugh has the most contact – Shirley and Steven – are

physically closest to him while the child with whom he has the least contact – Nell – is furthest out of his reach. As reference, figure 10 should be consulted which shows a similar kind of blocking within a frame, as explained by the *Glass Onion's* (2022) director Rian Johnson.

Figure 10: Reference blocking (Vanity Fair, 18:09)

An instance of the camera work creating a narrative of fear is evident in the first episode, when Luke spots an – at this point – unnamed figure in the window of Hill House. The camera pans from Luke to the window to show a pale female figure in a white robe with disheveled hair without providing context (E1, 35:14). The shot (fig. 11), is used frequently in the horror genre to evoke fear by removing identifying features and making the figure appear less human. To illustrate the effective use of this shot, figure 11 also shows a still from another horror film, *The Woman in Black*, for reference.

Figure 11: Women in Windows (E1, 35:19 / Watkins 44:30)

I argue that this camera angle and frame serve the purpose of instilling fear in the audience by referencing other horror films. As Genette proposes, a text can only ever be read within the context of texts that came before (Genette 9). Thus, by using this particular mise-en-scéne, Flanagan tells a story without needing a character to narrate it simply by referencing a shot frequently used in horror films to explain to the audience that Olivia is a threat.

In episode 1, Hugh holds onto the doorknob of Steven's room to keep the door closed, afraid that someone he is visibly afraid of will enter. Once he and Steven run from the room, a

figure in a white robe chases them. The figure remains unnamed until E9 which provides context for this scene by showing the other side of the door. In figure 12, this reveal is depicted in a close-up of Olivia's hand reaching for the doorknob. Her fingers are pale and claw-like, her intent is pursuit of her husband and child who are afraid of her, and she is filmed similarly to the images on the right hand-side of figure 12 which are stills from films featuring monstrous figures forcing their way into locked spaces as the aggressors.

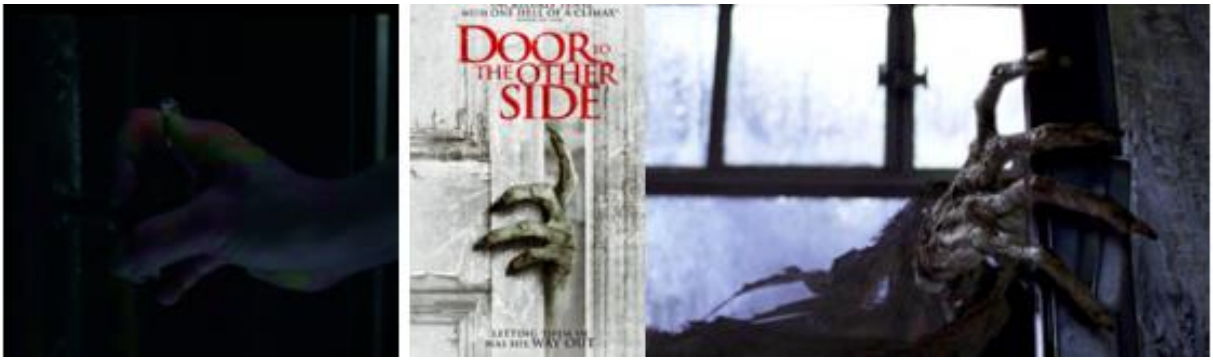

Figure 12: The Claw (E9, 48:03 / Imdb / Cuarón 20:43)

As is evident from the comparison, all three images use a similar lighting and filming technique such as cold tonality and black-and-white aesthetics. By, once again, referencing other horror films, Flanagan positions Olivia as the aggressor in the scene. As the audience recalls, for example *Door to the Other Side* (2016), Olivia's presence becomes fear-inducing.

Figure 13 shows a full-body-shot with the light illuminating Olivia's silhouette as she stands in-between the twins' beds.

Figure 13: The Monster (E9, 23:59)

The way she is positioned as hovering over her children's beds is reminiscent of other horror films which frame the monstrous figure in a similar way to diminish a character's humanity by erasing identity markers. With the audience unable to see her face, Olivia becomes a shadow. Her children, in contrast, are distinctive and recognizable while the audience only knows it is Olivia standing before them because the camera follows her to the twins' room. The only light within the room is aimed at the children to illuminate their faces. The camera is positioned at shoulder height, so that Olivia appears as an imposing figure. In contrast to Olivia, the twins appear smaller than they are due to the camera angle and the frame with Olivia foregrounded and the distance between the twins and her exaggerated due to the angle. In this shot, Olivia is filmed in a way similar to the ghosts appearing throughout the series such as Hazel with only

her silhouette but no defining features of her character being visible. Furthermore, the lighting of the room allows only for dark colors to appear on screen. Olivia is devoid of any color, making her appear more similar to the apparitions wandering through the house. She becomes an abject of herself once she distances her actions from her words and refuses to acknowledge the monstrous action of attempting to kill her children. The still above shows that, at this point in the narrative, Olivia has become that which she feared: the abject of a motherly figure and thus monstrous.

The show also accentuates Olivia's role as the main antagonist without explicitly assigning her this role as the characters never use this description. For example, figure 14 encapsulates Olivia's role within the narrative in a shot paralleling Olivia and the Red Room.

Figure 14: Red is for Olivia (E10, 13:53 / 8:40)

Flanagan uses a full-body-shot, with Olivia clad in red in front of a dark gray background. This shot is a direct reference to the Red Room as can be seen in the image on the right-hand side of figure 14 and parallels Olivia and the door to the room in color, position and frame. Both images share the so-called 'pop-of-color' to center the camera in front of a darker background in complementary colors. Furthermore, the pan of the camera accentuates Olivia's larger-than-life presence in having her cut an imposing figure and looking down with the camera positioned at a slightly lower angle. Apart from my thesis that the color red is connected to Olivia's 'madness', which I introduced in chapter 3.1.2, red is also associated with danger, emphasizing Olivia's stance as threatening. In addition, I interpret her placement in front of the house as the symbolization of her role as gatekeeper of the house whom the remaining Crains have to combat to gain entry and solve the mystery of Hill House.

I propose that the show deliberately uses the techniques mentioned above to misdirect the audience. Olivia is first dehumanized as her identifying features are removed and only her silhouette is discernible. She is then positioned as the main antagonist as she attempts to kill her children. This act revolts against that which society terms motherhood which makes Olivia the epitome of the monstrous mother archetype I introduced in chapter 2.2. However, the last

two episodes re-contextualize the scenes shown in E1-E8 by revealing Olivia's motives and thoughts. In the case of the doorknob-scene, the penultimate episode explains that Olivia's goal was not to harm Steven, as E1 indicated, but to keep him safe. However, due to her mental illness, Olivia is unable to realize that her attempts at keeping her children save are harmful to them. Reflecting on the filming techniques used, it is my understanding that the show employs unreliable narration via filming techniques to first introduce Olivia as the main antagonist (E1, 35:14), and thus fear-inducing, only to purposefully subvert this narrative during the finale. The show makes a point to explain that Olivia's expression of her fears is distorted by her untreated and unacknowledged mental illness.

3.1.4 The Hills: Ghosts of 'Madness'

Upon first glance, *The Haunting of Hill House*, as proclaimed by the title, should be read as a ghost narrative. However, my thesis is that the ghosts are manifestations of Olivia's fears that she tries to repress. In short: Olivia sees what she is afraid of. For example, Olivia fears her children being sick and dying as a result as is evident as she hallucinates Luke saying "my blood turns into poison and my body breaks down" (E9, 24:36). During *Two Storms*, Nell disappears in the thunderstorm and the family searches her all over the house. On the first floor, Olivia suddenly faces a boy in a wheelchair. His clothing stems from a different time period and his body is discolored and gray which reveals him as dead (E6, 42:39). E9 provides the audience with the boy's backstory. He is Poppy's son who died from poliomyelitis and symbolizes Olivia's fear of her children becoming sick.

As the show makes a point of reiterating that all the Crain children have inherited Olivia's mental illness, the ghosts of Hill House accordingly represent not only Olivia's fears but also the fears of her children. For example, Steven's Red Room vision is a pregnant Lee turning into a ghost as can be seen in the stills of figure 15. The still on the left-hand side shows Lee's body turning grey and looking similar to the image on the right-hand side which depicts Hazel, one of the ghosts of Hill House.

Figure 15: Ghosts (E10, 12:46 / E9, 48:49)

Steven's greatest fear, as is stated by himself, is to become a father and pass down his genetic mental illness. Accordingly, his hallucination shows Lee's body decaying because of the fetus inside of her. The same black mold that spreads throughout Hill House can be seen spreading across Lee's body, starting at her stomach. Thus, his ghost – which Lee becomes in his hallucination – expresses his fear of passing down his family's sickness. A similar process can be observed for Theodora as well. Theodora's Red Room ghost sprouts multiple dead hands, as she fears being touched.

The show introduces a narrative within the narrative, and, as is later clarified, the apparent origin of the haunting, in E1: the story of the Hills. In terms of story-telling, on the surface, this narrative provides the ghosts with backstories. However, this narrative fulfills another purpose entirely within the context of the ghosts representing Olivia's repressed fears. For example, in E8, Mrs. Dudley explains to Steven how Poppy and William met: "Poppy Hill. She was William's wife. She was insane. […] They met in the mental institution. They fell in love in an asylum. She was insane" (16:44). The implication is clear: Poppy is intended as Olivia's mirror, as William is intended as Hugh's. William is rumored to have bricked himself into a wall and tried to scratch his way out but was unsuccessful and died of asphyxiation (E7, 51:11). The show introduces his character as a parallel to Hugh trying to fix the house so that the family may flip it and subsequently escape its clutches. It is implied, during the conversation with Mrs. Dudley, that, out of the two of them, Poppy was the wild and violent one while William suffered from an unnamed condition that left him suicidal and depressed. His ghost appears on screen as the 'tall man'. In contrast to Poppy, he is never shown as he would have looked like prior to his death. His difference in appearance compared to Poppy suggests that he is used to foreshadow Hugh's death as Hugh takes his own life during the season finale. Furthermore, William is the only ghost that never appears to Olivia as he is connected to Hugh, Steven and Luke. Luke is the first person to see the 'tall man' and is afraid of him even in his adult years. This relationship of fear mirrors Luke's relationship with his father, as Hugh never manages to support Luke and was absent for most of his life, hovering, just as the 'tall man', at the periphery, looking at Luke but never interacting with him. Steven only shares one scene with the 'tall man' during E10 as Steven and Hugh enter the house. When confronted with the 'tall man' Hugh urges Steven to keep looking at him and nowhere else. Figure 16 depicts this scene.

Figure 16: Tall Man (E10, 7:59)

As is evident from the still, the 'tall man' inspects Steven by looking down on him in a close-up while Steven looks to the right side of the camera where Hugh is positioned. In terms of blocking, this scene constructs a three-angle exchange of looks with William looking at Steven, Steven looking at Hugh and Hugh presumably looking back at Steven as is depicted in the graph of figure 17.

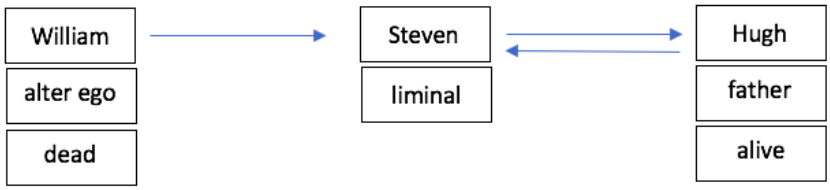

Figure 17: In-Between (o.r.)

This scene supports my thesis that William is intended as Hugh's alter ego, as during their car ride Hugh discovers Steven's secret. In having William and Hugh look at Steven but Steven looking only at Hugh, Hugh overcomes his own fear of Steven not seeing him as a father figure. As Steven listens to Hugh's warning of "keep looking at me" (E10, 8:02), he chooses his father over the ghost. He thus validates Hugh as his father and takes a step towards 'fixing' their relationship by placing trust in Hugh. Furthermore, his decision to look at Hugh ultimately saves Steven's life as he chooses the living over the pursuit of the dead, which subverts Olivia's narrative. At the moment of 'looking', Steven is caught in a liminal space on the precipice of a decision between the living and dead as he chooses whether to trust his father or follow his mother and sister into a mental break-down by pursuing the 'ghost story'. As Steven holds onto his sanity, he accepts William's existence as the shape of Steven's fear of his father and in that remains mentally stable. William proceeds to levitate down the hallway and in that supports my interpretation that Steven's choice negates that he is a ghost. As he and the fear he symbolizes no longer hold significance for Steven, William disappears.

Poppy, on the other hand, only appears to Olivia. During one of Olivia's conversations with Poppy, Poppy's backstory is revealed in the form of a monologue during which she details how she lost her children to sickness:

> I had a dream […] that I lost my little girl. […] I dreamed that she was choking on her own body for no reason. […] She breathed, ragged and hard, and she went stiff and one of her eyes turned red as blood. And she'd shake. […] She died. And my boy… I once dreamed his little legs stopped working. […] In the end, he couldn't even see me there with him. And then he stopped banging, he stopped crying. He stopped it all once he died. I held him so long, he went cold in my arms. But that was just a dream […] And then I woke up and they were safe in their beds (E9, 17:10)

This monologue is essential as it reveals the purpose of introducing Poppy's character. She is intended as a manifestation of Olivia's fears: that her children will die if she lets them leave the house. It is my hypothesis that Olivia creates Poppy's character after her own image, a young mother worried about her children and unable to save them when they are threatened. In having Poppy voice her own story, the show not only voices Olivia's fears she is unable to communicate up to this point but also allows Olivia to remain within her own hallucination, feeling justified in her fears. I argue that Olivia creates Poppy to give voice of reason to her own fear because if Poppy is a ghost and mother who experienced the misfortune of her children dying, Olivia is justified in her own fear of her children dying simply because it happened to someone else. Poppy telling Olivia that she 'woke up her children' and that once she had, they were safe forever, should be interpreted as Olivia planning to kill her children. Her justification that she is waking them up and thus saving them is based on her belief that Poppy is a kindred spirit trying to help.

Poppy as Olivia's alter ego acts in her interest as an extension of Olivia which is evident in the finale of the show. Instead of Olivia, the audience observes Poppy as she locks all four remaining Crain children into the Red Room and propels them into hallucinations of their own. In doing so, she entraps the children to fulfill Olivia's wish to keep them safe from the outside world as is reiterated in Luke's hallucination with Olivia trying to convince Luke to remain in the room with her: "It's the world, my love, it isn't and it wasn't and you should have never been fed to it like you were […] this [house] is a gift for us all […] you want to be in here" (E10, 35:46). Olivia's main objective – to keep the children locked up in the room with her which is a metaphor for killing them – is achieved by Poppy's entrapment of the children. Olivia is unable to understand that her efforts in keeping her children safe suffocate them until they are dead as was the case for Nell (E5, 1:07:14). However, as Olivia does not accept her own 'madness', it is crucial that the actions she desires to be taken are not taken by her but by a proxy. In imagining that Poppy – according to her own mind a ghost – abducts the children and locks them in, she reduces her own guilt and spares herself of the responsibility for killing Nell

and almost killing the other children. According to Olivia's understanding, while Poppy achieves the results desired by Olivia, Olivia is not to blame for Poppy's actions.

The parallels between the Hills and the Crains, however, are not relegated to their being expressions of the Crains' fears. Rather, their narrative is used to foreshadow the Crains' end as early as E1: "The Hills […] they lived all alone. In the night. In the dark" (50:02). This statement by Mrs. Dudley not only alludes to a sinister fate having befallen the Hills, with regard to 'in the night. In the dark', it also warns the Crains of staying in the house at night and of what will happen to them once they move into Hill House. The emphasis on 'alone' hints at the isolation the family faces once it becomes clear that the house is much more damaged than previously thought and that their stay will be extended. Furthermore, the phrase parallels the Hills' fate with that of the Crains in that the Hills suffered from mental illness and were thus isolated from society. The show then progresses to narrate the story of the Crains who also carry the potential for mental illness and are isolated from society due to it, which is mostly evident from Nell's story who is unable to cope with her husband's death and experiences depressive episodes that lead to her suicide. Statements about the Hills such as "[s]he said a lot of things that didn't make sense" (E5, 20:22) mirror statements about the Crains such as "[s]he was sick out of her mind" (E8, 15:42) to further emphasize their connectedness.

3.1.5 Decay: The House as an Extension of Olivia

The use of décor to create an outward expression of a character's mindset was established by Kalteis (54-69) who argues that so-called 'Stimmungsräume' represent the inner landscape of the feelings of adolescents in literature. Simplified, if the adolescent feels isolated, the weather in the narrative may change to snowfall to outwardly signify this emotion. My premise is that *The Haunting of Hill House* uses a similar technique to show Olivia's deteriorating mental health in the interior of Hill House. As Srinivasan states: "Olivia loses her way within her own house, even as she loses her sense of identity within herself" (Srinivasan para. 3). In addition, the Crains discover rooms they were unaware existed within Hill House. It is worthy to note that Olivia is never the person to find a hidden room. I argue that the discovery of hidden rooms coincides with the family becoming more aware of Olivia's decline in mental health. For example, Hugh's discovery of William's dead body is preceded by Olivia being unable to explain her scribbling across the house's blueprints. During this scene, Olivia breaks down, exclaiming that she had been unaware of how fragile her state of mind had become. Hugh is shaken by her outburst, which marks this scene as one of the first instances of his questioning his wife's sanity (E7, 50:35). I thus suggest that the more rooms are discovered, the closer the family is to discovering and acknowledging Olivia's mental illness. In using this technique of

revelation, the series utilizes one of the most prevalent tropes in the American Gothic: the making visible of what is taboo. The taboo, in this case, is acknowledging and actively speaking about Olivia's mental illness.

"I've got four plans, none of them match. This house is schizophrenic" (E7, 15:26). This statement made by Hugh in E7 supports my hypothesis that, because Hugh is unable to acknowledge his wife's decline in mental health, he focuses on fixing the house as an action of proxy. He becomes aware that the house's layout is a-typical as hallways lead nowhere and there are no plans that show the actual layout of the house. I propose that this scene demonstrates how Hugh unknowingly projects that which he cannot voice – his wife's mental illness – onto the house to reduce its impact on his psyche. Because Hugh is unable to cope with his wife's state, he refuses to see it in order to cope. Similarly, he struggles with acknowledging the reality of Hill House being more damaged than he anticipated. The phrase 'fix it' becomes detrimental in the show as it links Olivia's fate and that of Hill House. There are two instances during which Hugh mutters the phrase: once, when he tries to fix the house after discovering the extent of the damage and a second time when he finds Olivia's body and tries to hold her head together which has been split open by the impact of her fall. Hugh's 'I can fix it' speaks of his inability to acknowledge that there are issues beyond his expertise that require outside assistance. His refusal to accept that his wife is mentally ill is directly linked to his refusal to accept the state of the house. The premise is clear: In letting Hugh fail to fix the house by accepting outside help, he fails to save his wife from her fate because he refuses to acknowledge her mental illness and as a result does not support her in getting professional help. Furthermore, Hugh's frustration with both the house and his wife increase whenever his attempts at fixing are thwarted. When he suspects water coming from the Red Room, for example, he tries to force his way into the room as can be seen in figure 18.

Figure 18: "Fix it" (E7, 38:00)

This scene coincides with Hugh stating that the "house doesn't like it" (E1, 19:06) whenever he tries to fix it. Olivia has a similar reaction to whenever Hugh implies she should take time to relax and calm down or that he suspects her mental health to be in jeopardy (E9, 21:30).

Furthermore, when her children supposedly damage the house by writing on the walls, Olivia herself links her migraines to the house being damaged: “I have a steel poker in my head and my daughters are trashing my…” (E5, 21:58). These instances are evidence of the house being a sentient extension of Olivia’s body and mind. Whenever someone works on the house, Olivia experiences pain. Therefore, the more the damage to the house is revealed, the more evident and overt Olivia’s ‘madness’ becomes in turn.

The most noteworthy instance of the house reflecting Liv’s inward struggle is the sudden appearance of mold on the third floor. Not only is the Red Room situated on the third floor, the molding also spreads from there without any explanation. Hugh describes the damage as “veins of mold” (E7, 15:09) which alludes not only to a disruption to the structural integrity of the house, but also parallels Olivia’s declining mental health. The mold symbolizes her ‘madness’ which, despite Hugh’s efforts to fix the house and fix her, continues to endanger the family. This hypothesis is supported in the final episode when Poppy touches Hugh and black veins start to spread across his body. Furthermore, all ghosts appear with black molding across their bodies such as Nell and Poppy. As they are representations of Olivia’s repressed fears as well as bound to the house, the molding and decay extend to them as well. Figure 19 shows the similarity in the mold and the black veins, thus illustrating that they are intended as the metaphorical spreading of Olivia’s ‘madness’ across the house and thus across her own mind.

Figure 19: Mold (E10, 42:22 / 18:31)

The layout of the house also corroborates the narrative of Olivia as a monstrous mother figure in that the house notably lacks a kitchen. The only scene shot in a room that resembles a kitchen, with a stove and a basin but no equipment to prepare food, occurs when the rat poison is introduced. Letting Olivia plan the murder of her children in the room most frequently associated with and connected to women and motherhood, positions her even more clearly as a monstrous mother figure. Liggins’ claim that a “kitchenless house [breaks] the rules of domesticity” (19) supports this hypothesis. As production designer Patricio M. Farrell states in

an interview, he aimed at making a beautiful set where the fear stemmed from being in a familiar environment that is made unfamiliar (Grobar para. 4), thus indirectly referring to Freud's concept of the uncanny. Through the lack of an essential room – the kitchen – the house becomes strange to the audience. Furthermore, by using the kitchen-like room to kill the children subverts the intended function of the room which is to nurture, thus, making it even more uncanny. In the interview, Farrell also reveals that Hill House is supposed to contrast the pristine décor of the past with "a creepier and much more broken-down version of the same space" (Grobar para. 25). The house's interior was synthetically aged and damaged to embody a long period of abandonment and signal neglect (Grobar para. 26). This insight further supports my argumentation that the set is purposefully designed to subvert expectations so that what has been homely has now become uncanny and thus fear-inducing.

3.1.6 The Red Room: A Spatial Manifestation of 'Madness'

During the first episode, the audience is introduced to the Crain family with Shirley running up the spiral staircase in figure 20.

Figure 20: Staircase (E1, 19:34)

This staircase plays a major role in the events occurring in this season. Not only does the staircase separate the attic and the Red Room from the second floor, the windows behind it are also separated by color. The upper half of the window is tinted red, the lower half is colored blue which corresponds to the argument I introduced in section 3.1.2. I suggest that the color separation of the window signals not only a spatial separation of spheres within the house, but also assigns these spheres to Olivia and Hugh respectively. Therefore, the attic with the Red Room belongs to Olivia and is thus marked red while the downstairs belongs to Hugh and is colored blue. The children oscillating between these two spheres further supports the argumentation that Hugh and Olivia embody the two states of 'sanity' and 'insanity'.

Metaphorically speaking, Hugh as the 'sane' parent is down to earth while Olivia as the 'insane' parent is high up in the air, a statement Hugh corroborates in stating that Olivia said she would become 'untethered' without him (E8, 9:14).

The connection between the Red Room and Olivia is explored throughout the season in various instances and is alluded to almost constantly. For example, in a continuation of the staircase-shot, Shirley and Nell try to open the door to the Red Room. Despite being in possession of a master key, the door refuses to be opened. At this point, Olivia's behavior suggests no outward deviation from 'sanity' as she keeps her migraines a secret (E1, 20:12). Once Olivia is less capable of masking her symptoms, the Red Room corresponds by leaking water. The association is clear: The leakage of fluid can be interpreted as a leakage of secrets. During the scene where Hugh and Steven discuss the leakage, Olivia wears a red top which symbolizes her connection to the Red Room (E7, 23:21).

When Mr. Dudley suggests to Hugh that his wife might not be well Hugh's first response is "It's probably not your place" (E, 27:23), suggesting that he does not wish to acknowledge that Mr. Dudley may be correct in her observation. However, after a pause, Hugh concedes, stating that he will have to talk to Olivia because the discovery of the ruined plans of Hill House are tangible proof of something being amiss. Once Hugh acknowledges something being amiss, the house responds by injuring Hugh as the ventilator slices his hands despite Steven having unplugged it (E7, 37:04). Following this sequence, Hugh tries to force his way into the Red Room (E7, 38:14) but is unsuccessful. This scene indicates that Hugh is aware – on a subconscious level at this point – that there is a connection between his wife's state of mind and the state of the house. The door to the Red Room remains impenetrable until the very end of this episode during which the door is ajar for the first time (E7, 58:32).

The opening of the door to the Red Room is paralleled with Hugh becoming more aware of Olivia's declining mental health, starting with attempting to attack him with a screwdriver. When Hugh confronts her, she lessens the severity of the act by referring to it as a dream. For the first time, however, Hugh refuses to accept this response and insists on discussing the issue as he states "we need to talk" (E7, 42:40). This marks the first instance that Hugh is no longer able to ignore or dismiss Olivia's symptoms. Furthermore, he shows her the blueprints of the house and refuses to allow her to make excuses on how the damage occurred. By forcing her to acknowledge that she is responsible and that there is an issue if she does not remember damaging the blueprints, they are both able to acknowledge that she needs help. I argue that it is this acknowledgment of Olivia's mental illness that is visualized in the Red Room's door being ajar for the first time in seven episodes. It is my understanding that the room symbolizes

Olivia's 'madness' and its being unlocked coincides with Hugh abandoning his coping mechanism of 'don't look' which I introduced during the first chapter of this analysis.

The Red Room being a spatial metaphor for 'madness' – as the title of this chapter proposes – is further supported by Hugh's inability to enter the Red Room. Only in one instance Hugh deviates from this pattern: when he saves his children from being poisoned by his wife (E9, 45:56). The other family members are all able to enter the room at least once during the series because the room is the spatial manifestation – the making-visible – of their mental illness. As I suggested before, all the Crains except for Hugh carry genes that make them more prone to experience mental illness than others. As the children are able to enter the Red Room, the show emphasizes that they experience a decline in mental health to varying degrees. For example, Nell committing suicide at Hill House accentuates the connectedness of the Crains to the Red Room which is explained by Nell herself during her final monologue:

> This room is like the heart of the house. No, not a heart, a stomach. It was your dance studio, Theo. It was my toy room. It was a reading room for mom. A game room for Steve. A family room for Shirley. A treehouse. But it was always the Red Room. It put on different faces so that'd we'd be still and quiet. While it digested. I'm like a small creature swallowed whole by a monster (E10, 46:50).

This monologue not only supports my thesis that the Red Room is a spatial metaphor for mental illness, it also shows how people are isolated from society and even their own family when they present with symptoms of mental illness. Furthermore, this monologue and the montage of shapes the Red Room takes on for each family member encapsulate how mental illness presents differently for anyone without diminishing its validity, no matter the shape. Because the Crain children inherited Olivia's 'madness', they are all able to enter the Red Room, however, as is evident in Luke's addiction, Shirley's denial, Theodora's numbness, Steven's fear of being a father and Nell's depression, their mental illness presents in different ways which are visualized by the different layouts of the Red Room.

During that last episode, Hugh finally acknowledges his awareness of Olivia's 'madness' in a conversation with her ghost. Once confronted with his coping mechanisms of refusing to talk about Olivia, he states

> I was holding a door. I was holding a door close. I had my back against it. Got my arms out wide because I knew there were monsters on the other side and they wanted what was left of our family. And I held it so hard that I didn't have arms left for the kids and the monsters got through anyway (E10, 46:50).

This monologue suggests that Hugh was aware of the potential impact acknowledging Olivia's 'madness' with his children could have had on their psyche and that he decided it would be less triggering for the children to refuse to discuss it at all. In retrospect, Hugh realizes that his

children would have benefitted from acknowledging their genetic heritage and the potential for mental illness. 'The monsters got through anyway' refers to Nell's suicide and marks Hugh's final development to understanding that mental illness should not be a taboo topic which would have potentially saved his daughter. Furthermore, Hugh realizes that to the end, Olivia is unable to acknowledge her own mental illness and that this refusal endangers their children even more. He asks her to "open the door, let me fix it" (E10, 46:50), once more referencing his coping strategy. This time, however, 'fixing it' refers to openly discussing mental illness which is symbolized by opening the door to the Red Room. Figure 21 should be consulted as reference in terms of the two opposing influences on the Crain children as well as their inherited potential for mental illness.

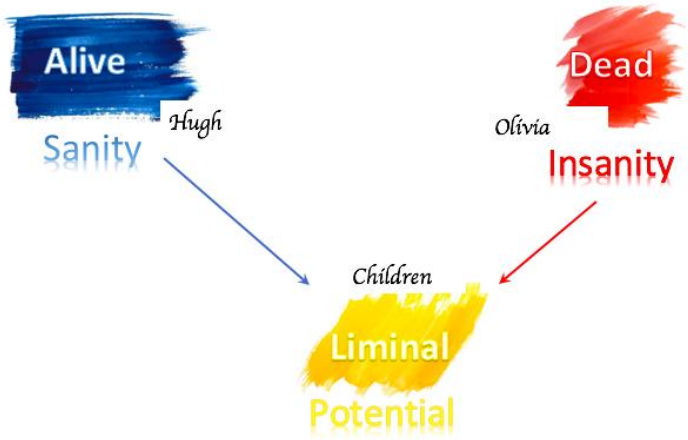

Figure 21: Trifecta of Sanity (o.r.)

As they oscillate between their mother and father, they enter a liminal space which they are only able to leave once both Hugh and Olivia accept mental illness as the true reason for the haunting of Hill House.

3.2 Bly Manor: Ghosts of 'Queerness'

"I thought I slipped into a hidden room / Out of harsh light. / In cushioned dark, among rich furnishings, / There I restored my sight. / such luxury could never be for me! / It was for me" (Replansky ch. "The Oasis"). The poem above encapsulates that 'queerness' and architecture can be closely intertwined in contemporary art. The metaphor of rooms within a house resembling a body and that body being queer is employed not only in *The Haunting of Bly Manor* as a singular phenomenon but rather used frequently in works of art as well to illustrate the struggle queer people may face at being excluded from society. One of the most common places associated with 'queerness' is that of the closet, a room also alluded to in the poem above. As Replansky writes, it is a room set in darkness, hidden from sight, a room of both refuge and isolation. The rooms of Bly Manor correspond to what Replansky identifies as an

experience common among people of the LGBTQIA+ spectrum. This experience is conjoined with feelings of fear, abandonment, shame, guilt and the sense of not belonging. *The Haunting of Bly Manor* allows its protagonist to explore these feelings by exploring Bly's grounds.

My main hypothesis pertaining to this primary text is, that the haunting of Bly Manor begins and ends with Danielle as she is the one to carry a ghost with her in Edmund and lift the haunting by absorbing Viola into herself. Due to the audience following Danielle, the ghosts are introduced on-screen and within the narrative at the same time. I will argue that the ghosts represent aspects of Danielle's identity that she cannot accept and that scare her because they visualize what she is afraid of. My analysis focuses mostly on Edmund O'Mara, Peter Quint, Rebecca Jessel and Viola Llyod as these four ghosts have a significant impact on the narrative which expands beyond being means to induce fear as is the case for other ghosts such as the faceless boy and the pest doctor. Each of the four ghosts mentioned is related to Danielle acknowledging and accepting her own sexual identity. The parallels between Viola and Danielle will be one focal aspect of the analysis as Viola is introduced as Danielle's abject which makes her both a threat to and part of Danielle.

3.2.1 "Single by choice": Language of Taboo

"Single by choice" (E1, 6:02) is the first description of Danielle the audience is given. This phrase is not followed by an explanation. As it is the first phrase associated with Danielle, Flanagan mis-directs the audience to conclude that Danielle may be heartbroken about a man by omitting the reason for her singleness. Her sexuality remains mostly unquestioned until E4. The apparent heteronormativity of Danielle's sexual orientation is supported by her seeing apparitions of a man whenever she looks into a mirror. These scenes allude to the man haunting her because of a past heartbreak, thus implying a heterosexual relationship. For the duration of the first four episodes, this misconception is only challenged subtly. One instance that indicates Danielle might experience same-sex-attraction occurs in E3 when she touches Jamie's hand. Jamie's response of "who the hell knew" (E3, 52:58) can be interpreted as an inconsequential remark. However, within the context of E4, this remark can be re-contextualized as Jamie becoming aware of Danielle's attraction to women. This remark, as is the case for the majority of conversations about the topic of sexuality, remains vague and implicit. I argue that this season introduces implicit talk of non-heteronormative female sexuality as a stigmatized topic to break the taboo and offer a non-stigmatized discourse of female homosexuality on screen.

To progress to the stage of open discussion and removal of stigma, the audience follows Danielle's struggle with herself and her social circle. For example, she says to her mother: "I'm not running. From anything. And it hurts me when you say that" (E1, 14:36). On the surface,

this conversation refers to Edmund's death and Danielle's inability to cope with it. However, E4 re-contextualizes this conversation as it pertaining to Danielle's reasons for ending the relationship with Edmund. The episode introduces sub-contextual clues which allude to Danielle harboring a secret. At first, it appears as if that secret is Edmund's death and that Danielle feels responsible. However, E4 unveils the true reason for Danielle seeing Edmund's ghost: shame.

I argue that the show uses double-layers in a majority of conversations in order for the conversation to take on a different meaning when re-visited after the full context of the situation becomes apparent. In doing so, the show gives voice to how the taboo of 'queerness' is navigated in conversation in a society that did not allow for 'queerness' to be discussed. According to Schmutzer, people who identified as homosexual were inclined to specific linguistic codes to avoid prosecution as homosexuality had been criminalized until up to 2003 (Schmutzer 157). One example to support this hypothesis occurs during the conversations between Edmund and Danielle in E4. The first indication that Danielle questions her impending nuptials occurs when Edmund asks her whether she is ready for their engagement party only for Danielle to answer "I think so" (E4, 2:24). The lack of enthusiasm for what is still considered one of the most popular life goals for women (Singh 22) is a signal to the audience to question the reasons for Danielle's lackluster reaction. Furthermore, as Danielle rejects the 'female dream', the show distances Danielle from the image women are meant to portray in American culture I introduced in chapter 2.2. The subsequent dialogue between Danielle and Edmund concords with this statement, as Danielle says: "I thought I wanted it. I wanted to want it. […] so many people to let down […] I can't." (E4, 26:48). The 'it' is never assigned a proper noun which is another instance of double-layering. The audience assumes Danielle refers to the marriage, however, as is later revealed, she refers to her own sexuality. 'It', in this instance, means her sexual identity and the lack of attraction to Edmund. The subsequent dialogue shows that Danielle is plagued by feelings of guilt and shame with regard to her own sexual preferences just before the accident. When Danielle explains her decision and gives reasons for not speaking up sooner, she states: "I just didn't wanna hurt you. Or your mom. Or your family" (E4, 27:49). This line reveals that Danielle is aware that non-heteronormative sexualities face stigma that she is, at this moment, unable to conquer by living true to herself. However, the next line reveals that Danielle knows she is different from what she perceives as society's standard for woman. She says: "And then it was just what we were doing. I just thought that I was being selfish. That I could just stick it out and eventually I would feel like I was supposed to" (E4, 28:12). Not only does she imply that she had never felt comfortable in this relationship,

she also admits to having denied her feelings in order to do what was expected of her: marry a man. The phrase 'like I was supposed to' implies that she is aware of society's norms and standards for women and that she wanted to adhere to them but found herself unable to do so. While it is still possible that she might be referring only to her relationship with Edmund, the contextual clues preceding this conversation refute this interpretation. Following this conversation, the audience is asked to re-evaluate a statement made by Danielle's mother earlier in that episode. She tells Edmund's mother that "Danielle does not share my taste in men" (E4, 15:49), a statement which, on the surface, can be read as Danielle's mother approving of Edmund as the right kind of man. However, within the context revealed during Danielle's conversation with Edmund, this statement can also refer to Danielle not sharing her mother's taste in men because she does not have a taste for men at all.

The double-layering extends not only to conversations but also to a dissonance between Danielle's words and her body language which is caused by her wish to adhere to society's rules conflicting with her desire to express herself. During the first six episodes, Danielle does not express her feelings openly because she cannot yet accept herself being 'different'. For example, Edmund's mother gifts Danielle her wedding dress, expecting that Danielle will tell her if she does not want to wear it, for whatever reason. The rise in pitch in Danielle's voice when she answers that the dress is beautiful, the increase in respiration, the slight flush on her cheeks and her forcing a tense smile are indicators that she feels pressured in this moment to accept the gift (E4, 5:23). Furthermore, when Jamie tries to kiss her after explicitly asking Danielle's consent, Danielle pulls away which causes Jamie to question whether Danielle can be trusted to express consent (E6, 10:22). Because Danielle is still unable to accept herself, she may want to kiss Jamie but she cannot bring herself to actually kiss Jamie. I suggest that the reason for this struggle between want and action is that in privately wanting something Danielle is not confronted by society's response to that want. As long as the desire is only admitted to within Danielle's own head, she remains the image of a woman that is prescribed by society. If she acts on her desires, the action may be judged by others and she irreversibly positions herself outside of the norms of society.

Lastly, the show gives examples of how the language of taboo is not only used within the narrative but also to comment on the narrative. When Danielle tries on her wedding dress, the seamstress comments on her body, saying she has great shoulders and should wear her hair up to showcase them more (E4, 16:13). This line of dialogue can be interpreted as a genuine compliment with no intent behind it. However, the seamstress runs her fingers down Danielle's back, implying that she, too, is attracted to women. The entirety of the scene consists of implicit

remarks that allude to something that is never explicitly mentioned. In general, *The Haunting of Bly Manor* never uses the words 'queer', 'gay', 'lesbian', or 'homosexual'. I thus argue that the show deliberately omits these words because the audience follows Danielle's perception of a world where these terms are as taboo as is sexual attraction to the same gender. Thus, every interaction and conversation where sexuality is a topic, must occur implicitly because Danielle is not yet able to explicitly acknowledge and give voice to her own identity.

3.2.2 Light, Camera, Action: Filming Fear

While both *The Haunting of Hill House* and *The Haunting of Bly Manor* are set within the horror genre and use the haunted house as a background to tell a ghost story, the second installment of the series is filmed differently than the first. In this section, I will analyze how fear is filmed in *The Haunting of Bly Ma*nor. The first still pertaining to this analysis is depicted in figure 22 on the left-hand side.

Figure 22: Final-Girl-Shot (E1, 51:12 / Nast pict. 1 / Romero pict. 1)

The lighting of this shot illuminates Danielle while the background is out of focus. The camera is positioned slightly lower than Danielle's shoulder and pans upwards. Danielle looks over her shoulder at somewhere above the camera. The shot composition implies that Danielle is intimidated by the figure looking down on her as is evident form her facial expression. This OTS induces a feeling of fear of being followed as the camera presents another perspective as if someone was looking at Danielle looking at a third person. The narrative itself offers support for this interpretation as it is later revealed in a camera pan and zoom that Peter Quint watched Danielle as she watched him in the still above. His position on the balustrade of Bly Manor explains the reason for Danielle looking up. Furthermore another ghost is positioned at camera height which is the reason for the camera panning at Danielle while she does not look at the camera but at Peter, the implied threat. The shot encapsulates Danielle's fear of being followed which is expressed frequently in the show.

The stills on the right-hand side of figure 22 lend weight to the argument I presented in section 3.1.3 that Flanagan uses shots that are staples of the horror genre. In this instance, the shot composition references what I term 'the final-girl shot'. Clover describes the final girl as "the one who encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the preceding horror and of her own peril; who is chased, cornered, wounded; whom we see scream, stagger, fall, rise, and scream again. She is abject terror personified" (35). The shot shown in figure 22 is used frequently in pivotal moments of confrontation between the final girl and the villain with the final girl being on the run or being chased. Examples of this shot composition are Laurie (*Halloween,* 1978) and Brooke (*AHS 1984,* 2019). By using the 'final-girl shot', Flanagan establishes Danielle's importance for and her role within the narrative as the main character to take action against the threat inherent to Bly. In this shot, Flanagan also tricks the audience by establishing a dichotomy of protagonist (Danielle) and antagonist (Peter) by way of camera positioning. This dichotomy is later disregarded due to, what I argue to be, a shift in genre when Danielle confronts the ghosts of Bly Manor and in that learns that they are echoes of her own fear, the parts of herself she abjects because she is unable to accept them.

Another instance of how fear is filmed in *The Haunting of Bly Manor* can be seen in figure 23.

Figure 23: Hallway-Shot (E1, 31:30 / The Shining (Cornett pict. 2) / Murphy & Falchuck (E1, 24:23))

In this frame, the camera is, once again, positioned behind Danielle and follows her from the distance. The room is barely illuminated while Danielle is positioned slightly off-center in the frame but center within the door with the light of the open door illuminating her silhouette against the darkness of the hallway. According to Dumas, the hallway is a staple of horror films and haunted house films in particular due to the narrowness and potential for danger lurking behind a multitude of unopened doors (Dumas 21-37). In Danielle's case, no noises are audible during the sequence, an effect frequently used before a jump-scare. Flanagan, however, subverts expectations in reducing the jump-scare to the sudden whistle of the teakettle on the stove. The ghost the audience expects to scare Danielle instead hovers behind her, watching which is only revealed later in the scene. Thus, the presence of a ghost following Danielle supports the first reading of this shot, that she is being followed which is accomplished via

camera position. Furthermore, Danielle's robe in terms of color and frilliness contrasts the darkness and color palette of the room, thus using the Kuleshov Effect to create a new image from an existing image via juxtaposition (Reed 11), to emphasize that she does not belong to the darkness of the house.

This shot is also frequently used in horror films to create the feeling of being followed. The images on the right are stills selected from other horror films that make clear what I propose to be 'the hallway-shot'. As can be observed from the other stills, the hallway with the camera following the protagonist is one of the staple shots of horror film inventory. I suggest to further differentiate between the images on the left and the image on the outer right side. Both protagonists in the images on the left face away from the camera while the image on the right shows someone facing the camera with the protagonist being out of frame. This distinction is not used for aesthetic purposes but to direct the audience on whom to follow. I propose that these 'hallway-shots' either follow the protagonists in which case the figure over whose shoulder the camera pans is turned away from the camera (*The Haunting of Bly Manor / The Shining*) or the shot shows an antagonistic figure which is evident from the camera panning away from the protagonist to face the antagonistic figure positioned opposite the camera (*AHS Hotel*) in a POV-shot.

Lastly, Flanagan employs the 'transformation-shot' during the finale of *The Haunting of Bly Manor*. In terms of the narrative, this particular shot is essential in order for the show's premise to conclude. As Danielle shares a body with Viola, the season culminates in Danielle choosing to end her own life in the lake. Despite this being the foregrounded reading of the scene depicted in figure 24, there is another layer to this shot. Danielle opening her eyes during the final moments of this sequence implies that she is not dead but rather awakening to a new state of being. This argument is supported by comparing this shot to the still on the right-hand side of figure 24 taken from the film *Dark Shadows* (2012).

Figure 24: Transition-Shot (E9, 38:44 / Burton 1:48:27)

Both images show women during a transition from alive to (un-)dead. In using this particular shot, Flanagan parallels these scenes and embeds Danielle's transition into a larger context of female transition processes in horror television. *Dark Shadows* employs an almost identical shot as Dr. Hoffmann is thrown into the sea only to transition into a vampire during the final sequence of the film, thus awakening her to a life of the undead. Furthermore, as Israeli-Nevo states, 'transition' is a term closely related to the LGBTQIA+ community, oftentimes used to refer to coming out or physically transitioning from one gender to another (Israeli-Nevo, 34-49). The final scene of *The Haunting of Bly Manor* supports my hypothesis that the transition shot is indicative of Danielle having transitioned as it shows Danielle's hand on an aged Jamie's shoulder. By the rules of Bly Manor, Danielle cannot be a ghost as those who died on the grounds cannot leave Bly past their death. Her being able to touch Jamie's shoulder implies that she is at least present in Jamie's life. I thus propose a different reading of her apparent suicide as her finally accepting her true self and in that 'kills her old self'.

3.2.3 Mirroring Narratives: Love & Obsession

The show criticizes Peter and Rebecca's relationship as obsessive. However, due to both Peter and Rebecca's ghosts being extensions of Danielle's own fears, their relationship functions as a metaphorical representation of Danielle and Edmund's relationship. As the audience is omitted the progression of Edmund and Danielle's relationship, the show introduces Peter and Rebecca to illustrate the oppressive nature of both relationships. It is my hypothesis that Danielle's discovery of Peter and Rebecca's relationship causes her to reflect on her relationship with Edmund and to discover their similarities. Figure 25 contains two similar images that depict the parallels of these relationships in terms of narrative and visual storytelling.

Figure 25: Wrong Kind of Love (E3, 40:38 / E4, 36:45)

Both stills show similar body language for the men, with them holding the women in place with their right hand, a gesture which expresses dominance, according to Navarro (123). This gesture

as well as the similar lighting and composition of both frames symbolizes what Jamie identifies as the "wrong kind of love" (E3, 25:08). In paralleling Peter and Edmund, Danielle acknowledges the oppressive nature of Edmund's hold over her. At the beginning, she is scared of his ghost, avoids mirrors and experiences panic attacks whenever he appears. Once she learns of Peter's relationship with Rebecca, she throws Edmund's glasses into the bonfire to free herself from his presence (E4, 49:44).

Furthermore, Peter and Edmund both urge their partners to change for them, one implicitly and one forcefully. As was the case for Rebecca, Danielle enjoyed the beginning of her relationship because it was centered around friendship. Due to their age, Danielle had not yet understood her own sexuality which is the reason why she only questioned the relationship when they had already been together for some time. Similarly, Rebecca only becomes aware of how she changes to cater to Peter's wishes when he convinces her to kill herself to be with him. The metaphor is clear: Rebecca killing herself represents Danielle refuting her own sexuality and thus killing part of herself to be who Edmund wanted her to be. The only difference is that Danielle broke off the relationship before that final step. In other words, Rebecca and Peter embody an exaggerated version of Danielle and Edmund's relationship, thus portraying Danielle's killing part of her own identity to adhere to society's standards. As I discussed in the theory component of this thesis, McDaniel also argues the point that the au pair and Peter Quint are mirror images of each other in James' original text. Despite McDaniel referencing *The Turn of the Screw*, his analysis is congruent with my analysis of *The Haunting of Bly Manor*.

Danielle's budding relationship with Jamie contrasts the two heterosexual relationships shown prior. Jamie's cautionary tale about Peter results in Danielle discovering the difference between love and possession (E3, 25:33). She considers her relationship with Edmund under new circumstances. Jamie's role as not only the love interest but the right kind of love interest is emphasized in the contrast between Peter and Jamie's reactions to their significant others experiencing negative emotions. Flora finds Edmund's glasses which induces Danielle's panic attack (E2, 30:04). Whereas Peter weaponizes the insecurities Rebecca revealed to him (E3, 45:51), Jamie helps Danielle overcome her panic and calms her by listening to her without judgement. Flanagan's portrayal of a lesbian relationship as the right kind of love in contrast to a heterosexual relationship which is termed 'toxic' (E3, 25:18) within the narrative, contrast previous lesbian relationships on-screen. In that, Flanagan contributes to removing stigma assigned to lesbian and queer relationships.

3.2.4 Forbidden Rooms & Knocking on Doors: Bly as an Extension of Dani

As I stated in the theory component of this thesis, the haunted house as a spatial extension of a female's psyche is a prominent trope of the horror genre. To analyze how the primary text uses the manor's interior to visualize Danielle's state of mind, I will take into consideration Bly's layout. According to Bose, Bly was intended to oppose the oppressiveness of Hill House in that it has an airy quality and style. The large windows allow for natural lighting so the manor appears inviting and open. The color palette is based on red and brown tones as well as pastels (Bose para 13). Carson remarks that he house is not intended to look haunted, as opposed to Hill House, as well as on the lack of decay. The eerie feeling inherent to Bly is achieved via the uncanny. As Flanagan states "it's the place where we're supposed to be the safest […] Houses have lives, they're going to carry echoes of what's gone in there before" (Carson para. 8). The focus of the set design of Bly Manor is thus to both make a supposed safe place uncanny as well as to provide a space for the past and the present to interact.

Figure 26 shows a still of the center piece of Bly Manor, the double staircase.

Figure 26: Double Staircase (E1, 20:11)

Not only does this still illustrate the comments made about the set by Flanagan in terms of color use and interior, the double staircase also has underlying meaning in relation to the house's function as the spatial expression of Danielle's psyche. I propose that the double staircase, a contrast to Hill House's single staircase, represents Danielle's struggle with her own identity. One side of the staircase symbolizes what Danielle thinks society expects of her and her desire to acquiesce, while the other side symbolizes her own desires and wants which are not in accordance with society's norms for women. The split between the two sides embodies Danielle's struggle with accepting herself and overcoming her inability to decide which path to take.

The staircase lends weight to the description of the house the narrator offers in E1 which introduces the concept of exploration: "The rooms were larger at night […] and all she could see of the park were empty, with a great emptiness. An emptiness that called out to be explored" (E1, 30:10). In alluding to the house being open to exploration, the show references that Danielle is in the process of exploring parts of herself she had ignored or repressed until arriving

at Bly. As I discussed in section 3.2.2, Danielle leaves her room that first night to wander through the house. This scene occurs during the night because the darkness allows for Danielle to remain unobserved and, if the exploration is interpreted as a metaphor for exploring her sexuality, unjudged. Furthermore, Danielle's exploration leads her to uncover the entirety of the grounds as well as the house. In that, she explores the edges of her own psyche, its borders and shape.

The forbidden wing and its discovery represent Danielle's becoming aware of her own desires and acknowledging their existence. As figure 27 shows, the wing and rooms are characterized by the same mahogany as the rest of Bly, however, the lighting in theses sequences, with dust particles swirling in the air, emphasizes the emptiness and abandonment of the rooms while at the same time implying a liveliness that had occupied them before.

Figure 27: Forbidden Wing (E1, 21:19 / 39:24)

The furniture in the forbidden wing, as is evident from the right-hand image, is covered by white linen, making the furniture indistinctive. This still further supports my argument that the forbidden wing represents the parts of Danielle she forbids herself from exploring. The furniture is veiled because it marks aspects of Danielle's identity that she disguises and refuses to let others or herself see. The show supports this reading as it allows Danielle to enter rooms that are forbidden after she feels that she had always known Jamie, thus marking this scene the first instance in which she partially acknowledges her attraction to someone of the same gender (E1, 39:03). The show concludes with the forbidden wing being open to all inhabitants of Bly, lending weight to my hypothesis that Danielle's acceptance of herself causes the house to adjust gradually which is illustrated, for example, in the forbidden wing no longer being forbidden.

The Haunting of Bly Manor uses architecture as a metaphor prevalent in queer discourse such as the closet to embed the text into the context of LGBTQIA+ discourse. In E1, Miles and Flora lock Danielle inside a closet (E1, 47:39). The show offers no explanation for this scene. However, within the context of what the closet represents for queer people, namely oppression, fear and shame, the scene takes on meaning. As Immonen describes, the phrase "refers to the attempt of an individual and the community to keep secret or withhold sexual and gender

experiences and lifestyles deemed as deviant from the public eye" (57-78). Danielle's release from the closet is followed by her forcing Miles and Flora to take responsibility for their actions. This sequence foreshadows her stepping into herself and coming out later on in the show as she refuses to be locked into the closet any longer.

The significance of doors was discussed in section 2.3.4, with Liggins stating that doors mark the threshold between permeability and impenetrability as well as a liminal space of transition (Liggins 45-52). During the lucid sequences the ghosts experience, the auditive input of a knock interrupts their thoughts and calls them into their dream state. For Peter, the knock is most detrimental as he is forced to revisit his worst memory of his mother denying him her love because of who he is. I argue that because Peter can be read as an extension of Danielle, his experience with his mother, signaled by the knocking on doors, represents Danielle's own fear of her mother's reaction and subsequent potential rejection to her coming out. The knock symbolizes the disturbance of peace of mind Peter and in turn Danielle experience as they are confronted by a fear of being unloved for their true self.

Peter's goal of escaping Bly symbolizes escaping the oppression he faces at being trapped within a luxury environment where he feels like he does not belong. Similarly, Danielle is trapped within herself where she, too, feels she does not belong. Being distracted from that goal by intrusive thoughts – such as the memory of his mother – is congruent with Danielle being unable to accept her sexuality, with her attempts and progression being thwarted by Edmund and other ghosts.

3.2.5 Pink, Lavender & Burgundy: The Power of Saturation

The wardrobe of the characters in *The Haunting of Bly Manor* reflects not only their roles within the narrative but also visualizes the relationships between characters. The main colors of this season are pink, lavender and burgundy for Danielle and blues and greens for Peter and Viola. Rebecca's three significant outfits are a black dress, a salmon-colored blouse and a light brown fur coat.

I suggest that Rebecca represents a version of Danielle who was unable to leave an oppressive relationship. Her wardrobe reflects that in, for example, her blouse being reminiscent of Danielle's outfit during her interview with Henry. The black dress bears similarity to a funeral dress and is the only dress Rebecca wears after committing suicide. The dress color symbolizes grief over and unhappiness at being tied to Bly and Peter. The fur coat she tries on while naked is both a symbol of assumed wealth and oppression in that she is reluctant to put it on and Peter manipulates her into acquiescing.

Peter's wardrobe directly opposes Danielle's in color and style. For example, Danielle's clothes are adorned with ruffles while Peter's has straight lines and muted colors complementary to the colors Danielle wears, using darker blue tones in contrast to her bright lavender. The contrast in wardrobe emphasizes the psychological distance Danielle feels to Peter because he represents that which she is afraid of. Furthermore, once his true nature is revealed, his previous light beige and blue wardrobe is exchanged for a saturated brown coat and a dark blue Henley. Thus, Peter's wardrobe in both color and style is intended to provide a visual opposite to Danielle to visually exaggerate the distance between the characters.

Danielle's wardrobe, according to costume designer Falconer, is mainly centered around berry colors, pink and red (Fraser para. 11). On the basis of Falconer's notes, I argue that Danielle's clothes correspond with her progress towards accepting her sexuality. To account for the non-linear story-telling, I will analyze Danielle's outfits in chronological order. Thus, the first two dresses Danielle wears are shown in E4 (fig. 27).

Figure 28: Blush (E4, 2:30 / 5:36)

The dress on the left embodies connotations of what is considered 'traditional femininity'[4] as it embraces softness, delicacy and modesty. The outfit is similar to Danielle's potential wedding dress depicted on the right side of figure 28. The frilliness and light blush color signal that she is not yet comfortable in her identity and that she tries to please her social circle while she is not true to herself. Furthermore, the show emphasizes that the wedding dress does not fit Danielle which I interpret to symbolize that the dress, as it embodies the wedding, fits wrong because the wedding feels wrong to Danielle.

[4] traditional femininity: "relatively enduring characteristics encompassing traits, appearances, interests, and behaviors that have traditionally been considered relatively more typical of women" such as housework or sensitivity (Kachel et al. 2)

The first instance when Danielle claims agency for herself and starts to communicate her boundaries occurs when she wears a blush dress and jacket (fig. 29).

Figure 29: First Steps (E4, 35:20)

The jacket is reminiscent of her engagement and wedding dress in terms of color. However, the dress underneath lacks some of the softness the previous dresses showed. The incorporation of the green flower and plant print and the change of cut in the neckline allude to Danielle having changed as well. The green applications mark the beginning of her progression towards accepting herself which starts when she breaks off her engagement to Edmund. The dress and jacket are still similar to her previous outfits and the changes are sufficiently minute so that her development is signaled but not yet overt.

When Danielle applies for the position of au pair, she wears a dark blue blazer and a blush blouse with a bow detail. This outfit (fig. 30) does not fit her and appears costume-like in cut. I propose that, while darker colors symbolize Danielle's progress, in this instance I propose that she compensates for her insecurities with her wardrobe. The ill-fit signals that she attempts a more assertive mannerism but she has not yet completed her development for that assertiveness to be genuine. Her clothing, while appearing to signal her taking agency as is the case later on, visualizes that she only pretends to have changed while she has not yet accepted herself fully.

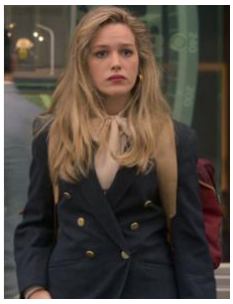

Figure 30: Performance in Pink (E1, 6:20)

The next significant outfit can be seen in figure 31.

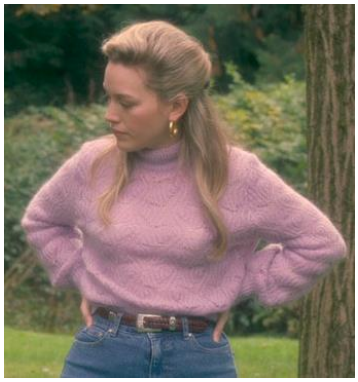

Figure 31: Significance of Lavender (E1, 33:23)

This still shows Danielle during E1 of *The Haunting of Bly Manor* after arriving at Bly. The change in wardrobe is more overt as it is the first time Danielle wears not a dress but denim jeans which is a much more 'masculine' look. Her shirt still belongs to the same color family as her dresses but much cooler in tone and less frilly in style. The change to lavender in combination with the blue of her jeans creates a more saturated outfit. This change in saturation is accompanied by an important step for Danielle within the narrative. Not only did she take on a job, thus, taking on agency, but she also established herself as an authority figure with the children and starts to enforce boundaries pertaining to her mental health.

The outfit shown in figure 32 marks another significant scene for Danielle.

Figure 32: Jeans on Jeans (E4, 8:16)

Her outfit, consisting entirely of blue and purple tones with none of her signature pink and blush colors, follows her decision not to attend Owen's mother's funeral. It is one of the first instances when she sets clear boundaries without justifying herself or acquiescing to someone's wishes despite being uncomfortable. Jamie's reassurance and her assisting Danielle to change from her funeral dress into jeans and a t-shirt help Danielle to accept that attending the funeral is not expected of her and that she is within her right to refuse the invitation (E4, 6:34).

Following a time jump of two years, Jamie and Danielle are in a committed relationship. The stills shown in figure 33 mark a significant change to Danielle's wardrobe.

Figure 33: Time Jump (E9, 24:14 / 23:35 / 22:04)

The skirts and blouses are similar to Danielle's earliest outfits; however, the colors are much bolder and more saturated with vibrant pinks, reds and dark purples instead of blush and light pink. Her wardrobe now includes leather skirts with a tight fit and blouses with sharp necklines. Thus, these outfits reflect aspects of Danielle from the past however in a much more expressive style and signal that she has conjoined her past and her present and has accepted all parts of herself. In incorporating both blue and red tones, the wardrobe illustrates that Danielle has overcome her shame. The combination of her outfits during her stay at Bly and elements of her wardrobe during her relationship with Edmund also symbolize Danielle being confident in her own identity which culminates in her last outfit as can be seen in figure 34.

Figure 34: Red Dress (E9, 38:46)

The still above shows Danielle during her transition scene in a deep red dress with spaghetti straps and a straight neckline. This outfit, in its saturation, color and style and fit, reflects the end of Danielle's journey and her accepting herself fully which, as I argued before, causes her transition.

Lastly, I argue that in being Danielle's abject, Viola' wardrobe presents the antithesis to Danielle's wardrobe. To illustrate, figure 35 can be consulted.

Figure 35: Lady in the Lake (E8, 50:42)

The costume design for this character, according to Falconer, is intended to oppose Danielle while maintaining a connection with her. Danielle's last dress mirrors Viola's in that they are both elegant and made of a heavy material (Fraser para. 11 / Truffaut-Wong para. 3). Viola's dress shares the detailed neckline and overall style of Danielle's earlier outfits. However, to contrast Danielle, the dress is void of color, emphasizing its role as an abject of Danielle's wardrobe.

It is worthy to note that despite Danielle being a lesbian character, her clothing and appearance are never what is considered monstrous or unfeminine. In contrast, Danielle wears pointedly feminine clothes throughout the series. This styling choice contrasts notions of what queer female characters on screen are 'supposed' to and have looked like in the past, as I discussed in section 2.2. Furthermore, in spite of Viola's role as Danielle's abject and her being introduced as a monstrous character, she too wears decidedly feminine clothes such as ruffled and fitted dresses.

3.2.6 Haunted from Within: The Ghosts as a Metaphor for Repression

I suggest that the ghosts of Bly Manor represent Danielle's repressed feelings and fears she is unable to confront, acknowledge or articulate. This hypothesis is based not only on my observations in terms of narrative and filming techniques, but is also substantiated by the show itself. In E4, the most significant episode in relation to Danielle's character as it shows her backstory, Danielle herself says "[i]t's not the first time, I've seen things that aren't there" (E4, 38:24). In acknowledging her own unreliability as a narrator, the show opens the discourse to question its narrative which is the focal point of my analysis. In a featurette, Flanagan spoke in a similar manner about the purpose of the ghosts of Bly, stating "I really wanted to play with

ghosts as an expression of emotional wounds we carry around" (Netflix, *Behind the Streams* 1:42). I argue that the ghosts are substitutes for parts of Danielle, related to her sexuality, that she is unable to acknowledge because of fear and shame. Her acknowledgement of the existence of the ghosts of Bly coincides with her starting to acknowledge that she is attracted to the same gender. It is my interpretation that the more Danielle sees herself, the more she sees the ghosts because they represent what she represses. Once the repression lifts, the ghosts become more visible and tangible to her and the audience with Viola being the most illustrative example.

In this chapter, I will focus on the three ghosts which Flanagan introduces as related to Danielle: Edmund, Peter and Viola. Edmund's ghost, as I indicated in section 3.2.3, represents the part of Danielle that is unable to let go of her past. As can be seen in figure 36, I term him the ghost of guilt.

Figure 36: Ghost of Guilt (E4, 36:44)

Edmund haunts Danielle whenever she looks at herself and with that acknowledges her own existence. He embodies her fears of being seen for who she is. The exaggerated lights reflecting in his glasses may overtly be related to his accident but also resemble the headlights which Danielle feels are observing her at any given moment. Her performative heterosexuality and heteronormativity are exaggerated in moments when she feels observed. Thus, Edmund appearing to her in private moments, for example when she bares herself to her own observation by looking into a mirror, represents her fear of being judged by society for her identity. In Edmund's ghost, Danielle sees her guilt about her choices, her fear of disappointing her and Edmund's family and her shame at being unable to be the ideal woman. When she wipes the mirror, the action symbolizes her inability to look at and accept all parts of herself. The sequences of Edmund's appearances also tend to follow scenes Danielle shares with Jamie as is the case, for example, in E2 (31:08). During these scenes, he appears as the visualization of her subconscious feelings of guilt caused by her fear of disappointing her family by being true to herself and thus violating standards society sets for women.

Peter Quint (fig. 37) represents that which Danielle's is ashamed of. He embodies the link between sexual desires and deviancy and in that part of herself that Danielle abhors.

Figure 37: Ghost of Shame (E7, 16:38)

Because Danielle is ashamed of her own sexuality, she envisions Peter and his violent selfishness as something to fear instead. In his overt sexuality, Peter challenges Danielle's abstinence and her refusal to even look at a woman she finds attractive. Peter thus represents the sexual desires Danielle experiences and feels within herself. His role as the main antagonist to combat until E8 supports this interpretation as it is Danielle's sexuality she mostly fights against. Once she acknowledges her own desires, Danielle is gradually less afraid of Peter.

Lastly, I argue that Viola is designed as Danielle's abject, not only in her wardrobe and appearance but also in her lack of defining features, lack of identity, lack of color, her brutality and, most importantly, her lack of speech (fig. 37).

Figure 38: Ghost of Fear (E8, 50:55)

In Viola, the parts of herself Danielle fears most are visualized. Viola thus represents that which Danielle abjects, as female homosexuality is abjected not only by society but also by Danielle herself. The indistinguishability of Viola's face coincides with Danielle's refusal to face herself. This inability is indicated at an early stage of the show when Miles and Flora refuse to say Viola's name. In that, they refuse her identity which coincides with them locking Danielle into the closet (E1, 48:44). Viola is othered in the removal of identifying features such as her facial structure and eye color, prohibited from speaking and denied the right to tell her backstory. Only during the finale, once Danielle starts to accept her sexuality, Viola regains her voice in

that her story is told. In awarding Viola an identity, Danielle's progress with her own identity is symbolized. Furthermore, in introducing Viola as the second main antagonist, the Lady of the Lake, a monstrous female figure and danger to all inhabitants at Bly, she is excluded from life at Bly. This exclusion expands to a spatial one as she can only enter the manor at night. Her roaming through the house being relegated to nighttime is not only used to induce fear. It also supports my argument that because she is the part of herself Danielle rejects, she is only allowed at Bly when Danielle's conscious is at rest, during the night when she is asleep. As Freud argues, dreams are a convolute of repressed desires taking shape (Freud 15) which is the reason for Viola only being able to wander during the night as she represents Danielle's darkest desires. Because of Danielle's concept of female homosexuality as deviant and lurid, she creates Viola as a monstrous figure. Viola becomes the antithesis to Danielle and haunts her because she embodies that which Danielle cannot accept and thus abjects.

Viola and Danielle's relationship culminates in a confrontation during which Danielle says: "[I]t's you, it's me, it's us" (E9, 11:34). These words mark more than the lifting of the haunting of Bly Manor; they mark the moment Danielle accepts herself in that she absorbs Viola into herself. Visually, it is the first scene of someone directly blocking Viola's path, thus forcing the camera and audience to see and acknowledge her. Viola and Danielle's merge is evident from the change in Danielle's eye color (E9, 17:46), suggesting her and Viola have become one. In that, the abject is reunited with the subject without being diminished but rather accepted as it is allowed visibility. Figure 39 shows the trifecta of the aspects of Danielle's identity.

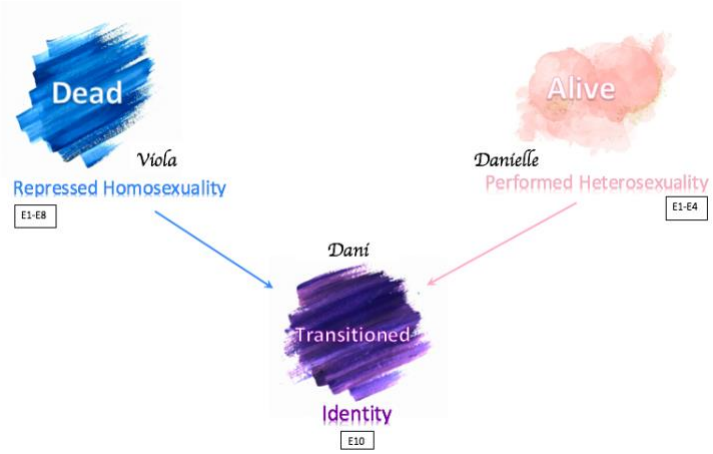

Figure 39: Trifecta of Identity (o.r.)

This graph illustrates Danielle's progress during the events of the season. I propose that Viola represents Danielle's abject in the form of repressed homosexuality. Danielle, at the beginning of the series, represents performed heterosexuality. However, as Danielle acknowledges her repressed feelings and rejects her performativity in order to become her true self which is

expressed in her wardrobe as well as her change in eye color, she transitions to a state of true identity. The final still of the episode, as seen in figure 40, supports this statement.

Figure 40: Acceptance (E9, 49:09)

In this still, an older Jamie rests on a divan as Danielle lays a hand on her shoulder. Despite Danielle's supposed death, she does not appear to be a ghost. I propose that, following her transition in the lake, Danielle has accepted all parts of herself and is now able to openly acknowledge her relationship with Jamie, as is indicated by the engagement ring on her left hand.

4 Bly Manor & Hill House: Haunted Houses or Haunted Women?

Following the close reading of the two primary texts, I propose that neither Bly Manor nor Hill House can be characterized as haunted houses according to the characteristics noted in section 2.3. Rather, I argue that the essential characteristics of a haunted house on television as Nakagawa proposes, such as the shift towards the private sphere as a challenge to the nuclear family, are not applicable to the primary texts. On the other hand, the house's interior such as the secret passageways and creaking doors as suggested by Benshoff were elements consistent with the primary texts. In terms of Liggins' work on haunted houses, some characteristics are applicable for Bly Manor and Hill House. For example, in both houses ruin and emptiness are key aspects of the house's topology. However, I argue that because the house is a sentient being spatially representing the protagonists' minds, its interior reflecting the feelings most prevalent in the protagonists' minds supports my thesis that the houses are not haunted but the protagonists are rather than contradicting it. Johnson's evaluation of haunted houses is also applicable to both Bly Manor and Hill House as they are spaces holding the protagonists captive as their interior emphasizes feelings of isolation and confinement (Johnson 522).

Despite some aspects being applicable to the houses featured in the primary texts, it is important to note that the secondary literature does not provide a clear distinction in terms of haunted houses with actual ghost apparitions and haunted houses with hallucinated ghost apparitions. I suggest that this is the case because the *The Haunting of* series is the first TV show to make use of the haunted house as an extension of the protagonists' fears and to question whether the ghosts are ghosts or metaphors. For example, when Johnson comments on the house evoking feelings of isolation, he ascribes these feelings to the setting of the house. If the house, however, is interpreted as an extension of Olivia and thus changes shape according to her state of mind, which was supported by the sudden appearance of mold on the third floor, Johnson's initial thesis holds true but must be extended. Thus, while some aspects of a haunted house are prevalent in at least one of the two primary texts, a majority of other aspects are not. Most importantly, if the texts are read as the ghosts being a representation of the protagonists' fears and thus entirely hallucinatory, the defining feature of a haunted house is not given for either text. The houses are not haunted, the protagonists are. To illustrate, I will conduct a comparison between, what I term, 'classic haunted houses on TV' and Bly Manor and Hill House. The houses selected for comparison correspond to the texts I introduced as examples earlier in section 2.3.5 and are excerpted from two samples of American horror films/TV shows that are exemplary for the genre. These samples are *American Horror Story* and *Supernatural*, each featuring at least two haunted houses and the appearances of ghosts.

The first set of houses to consider for comparison are Mott Mansion (*AHS Roanoke*) and Murder House (*AHS Murder House*). Figure 41 shows both houses side-by-side.

Figure 41: Roanoke & Murder House (Murphy & Falchuk S6, E1 / S1, E1)

As is evident from this still, the houses correspond to the classic haunted house trope in exterior. In its interior, Murder House portrays the elegance and overindulgence of the 1920s while Mott Mansion resembles a plantation house in a southern style with a broader layout and pitched roof. Mott Mansion is an example of the category 'bodies in the ground' as it is built on a field where a massacre killed the entire colony of Roanoke. Murder House was built in the 1920s

and its haunting is based on the violent deaths of its first owners, thus belonging to 'bodies in the building'. Both houses resemble Hill House and Bly Manor in that the souls of the dead are unable to leave the premise. However, unlike the primary texts, the ghosts are violent and dangerous to the inhabitants with Murder House being described as "not just evil. […] Crows would circle the house every day and inside it was sweltering hot […] he was born from the evil of this house, the source of darkness" (*Apocalypse* E6, 40:38). In season 6, murderers inhabit the house only to disappear after their spree. The narrator states: "Something got to them […] Not the police, something even more evil than they were. Something here. Everywhere. In the air. In the woods. In that *house*" (*Roanoke* E2, 28:42), alluding to the ghosts of the lost colony who murder those who buy the house as the colony claims the house and its grounds as theirs. In contrast to the primary texts, *AHS* utilizes the ghosts primarily to induce fear as they are the main threat of the respective season; they remain relegated to their function as elements of the horror genre with agency but without prompting a discussion of a societal issue such as mental illness or female 'queerness' as is the case for and essential to the primary texts.

Two classic examples of 'bodies in the building' can be seen in figure 42 which depicts *Supernatural's* Hell House (S1, E17) and Morton House (S3, E13).

Figure 42: Hell House & Morton House (Kripke S1, E17 / S3, E13)

These houses resemble Bly Manor and Hill House not only in exterior but also in color scheme and layout. Hell House and Morton House are characterized by their significant state of decay and abandonment and are marked by their backstories as 'murder houses'. In terms of narrative, Morton House can be classified as 'bodies in the building' as the haunting is caused by the suicide of its owner and his subsequent killing spree as a ghost whenever the house is occupied on February 29th. A similar narrative is introduced for Hell House whose owner Mordecai killed his daughters and subsequently every inhabitant of Hell House as a ghost. The ghosts inhabiting both houses are not able to leave the premise and are ultimately defeated by the Winchesters. The ghosts in *Supernatural's* haunted houses are relegated to the scare-factor and are the main evil which has to be conquered in their respective episodes. They serve no purpose beyond

inducing fear; the houses are mainly a background for the murder-narrative that needs to be solved in order to stop the haunting.

Figure 43 shows the exterior of Hill House and Bly Manor.

Figure 43: Hill House & Bly Manor (Flanagan S1, E1 / S2, E1)

Hill House, in terms of interior, decay, abandonment and background, also fits the classic trope of the haunted house. However, as the ghosts are conjured by Olivia's mind as she tries to justify her fears, the house itself cannot be considered haunted. On the surface, Bly Manor fits the category of a haunted house as suggested by Meehan (6) in that its violent history of murder causes the haunting. However, on the basis of my argumentation that the ghost of Viola is merely a projection of that which Danielle abjects and the murders are an exaggerated metaphor for Danielle's fear of her own sexuality, this characteristic is not met. While the 'spaces above and below' Ellis (xxx) identifies are employed in Bly Manor, as Danielle visits both the attic and the basement, the spaces are not relevant to the narrative but rather serve their intended purpose of creating a suspenseful atmosphere because they are fear-connotated. Furthermore, the importance of forbidden spaces as a representation of denial or rejection as is suggested by Liggins (52-117), is a major element of both Hill House and Bly Manor as they both explore hidden and forbidden rooms as a form of self-exploration.

I propose that McDaniel's assertion that a haunted house serves as a "kind of psychological mirror capable of reflecting—and often preying upon—the obsession of characters within" (McDaniel 4) is applicable to Bly Manor and Hill House. In addition to the categories I developed in chapter 2.3.5, I now argue that my previously erected framework of two haunted house categories should be expanded to include a third category which I term 'bodies of the mind'. An example of this category is Flanagan's recent *Netflix* adaptation of *The Fall of the House of Usher* (2023). The season introduces Roderick Usher's children as ghosts reliving their death loop in Usher's presence, thus, haunting him. Other characters who are in the same room as Usher and should thus also be able to see the ghosts of his children are unable to do so. The Usher children fall into the category of 'bodies of the mind' and substantiate my thesis for Bly Manor and Hill House.

The haunted houses of the primary texts belonging to this category are marked by their spatial visualization of the innerworkings of their respective protagonists. Interior elements such as broken statues, forbidden wings, hidden rooms and decaying walls are indicators of the issues which plague the protagonists. This category of haunted house diverges from categories 1 and 2 in that the haunting is linked to the protagonist; the house is not possessed by evil but rather a mirror image of a disturbed mind. Furthermore, categories 1 and 2 utilize ghosts as a threat while category 3 sees the ghosts as expressions of fear instead of them inducing fear. Curtis' thesis that the haunted houses in film in general are a metaphor for that which is unresolved and unacknowledged (Curtis ch. "souvenirs, dust and heirlooms") should be limited to category 3 as it pertains only to the house as an extension of the protagonist and not to the 'bodies in the ground' or 'bodies in the building' as these narratives focus exclusively on past wrongs affecting the living due to relations by blood or 'race'. Northedge's reading of *Netflix'* adaptations of *The Haunting of Hill House* (Jackson) and *The Turn of the Screw* (James) further supports my thesis that a third category of haunted houses should be considered. Figure 44 illustrates the classification of haunted houses I identified in the shape of a trifecta of three categories.

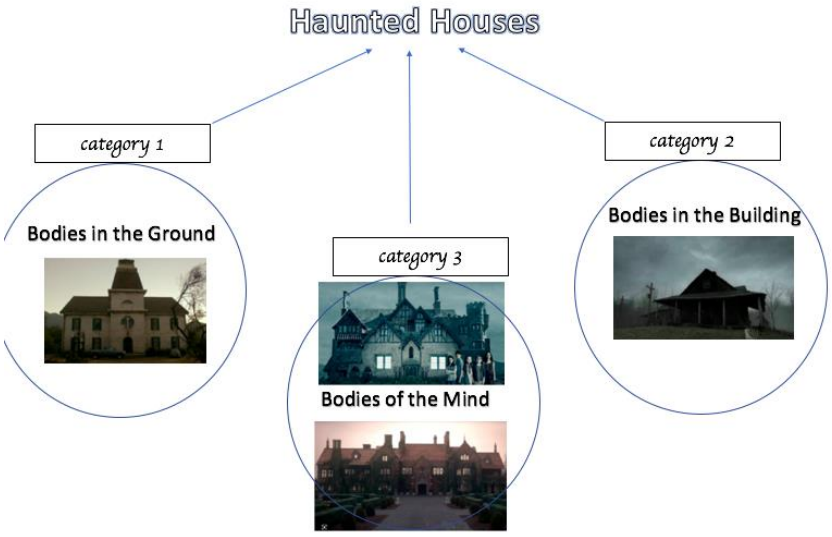

Figure 44: Trifecta of Haunted Houses (o.r.)

I suggest not only that haunted houses as a category within the horror genre need to be further distinguished and categorized according to the type of haunting that occurs, but also that the primary texts show the potential of the genre itself to use existing tropes in order to give issues of contemporary culture a platform. I argue that, in allowing Olivia and Danielle's stories to be told, the *The Haunting of* series provides a unique opportunity to critically assess the stigmatization of female 'madness' and 'queerness'. In foregrounding issues such as a decline in mental health or repression of sexual identity against the background of a haunted house, the

series allows the audience to see the protagonists' mind via the ghosts as they are manifestations of the protagonists' fears. I thus conclude from my analysis that Bly Manor and Hill House appear as haunted house narratives but are intended and conceptualized as tragedies.

Throughout *The Haunting of Hill House*, the Dudleys insist that the house acts as a catalysator for mental illness. Mr. Dudley's mother, for instance, experienced manic episodes when employed there. Mr. Dudley describes her state of mind as follows: "[S]he'd be scattered you might say […] talked to herself and the like. Towards the end, she'd wander into the woods at night" (E7, 27:43). This monologue is almost identical to Olivia's description of her own condition (E6, 16:17). In telling the story of Mr. Dudley's mother, the show emphasizes that professional help – in other words leaving the house – would benefit Olivia's mental health. With that, the show also positions itself within the discourse about the stigmatization of mental health. In advocating for Olivia to accept professional help and showing the consequences of her refusal, the show critically assesses how society classifies mental illness as a taboo topic. An open and honest dialogue without the fear of judgment or ostracization is needed to support those who suffer from mental illness as opposed to a language of avoidance. A similar approach is taken by *The Haunting of Bly Manor*. As Jamie advocates for love to be openly expressed and validates Danielle's fears of herself without casting judgement, Danielle is able to accept herself. During this process of acceptance, she starts to acknowledge her fears and, in that, she battles her own ghosts. Once she absorbs Viola into herself, she lifts the haunting of Bly Manor as the haunting within herself is lifted. Jamie's narration supports this interpretation: "The au pair invited Viola into herself, and the invitation had been accepted. In that instant the spell that Viola had cast over Bly was broken and all of the spirits trapped in her gravity were released. […] All that had once been trapped on the grounds was gone. To some other place" (E9, 13:19). The finale of the season with Danielle's hand on Jamie's shoulder, rejects the notion that Danielle had truly died and not only advocates for equality of same-sex relationships in making them visible on-screen in a non-toxic portrayal, but also emphasizes the importance of that visibility to increase acceptance of 'queerness' within society.

5 Conclusion

In the introduction to this paper I posed the thesis that the *The Haunting of* series uses the trope of the haunted house as a spatial manifestation of the psyche of its respective female protagonists. It was my understanding that the house can be interpreted as an extension of the female protagonist's mind as the haunting becomes the visual manifestation of the issue the characters try to repress. In using the concepts discussed in the theory section and applying them to the primary texts, this thesis was substantiated. As I had anticipated, the series used

both the uncanny and the abject in the form of the ghosts as a proxy for the repressed fears of the protagonists. One of the most significant points in my analysis was to discover that each season, while using the same concept, portrays this concept differently.

According to my interpretation, the *The Haunting of* series provides a platform for issues such as female 'madness' and 'queerness' that had thus far been shown only peripherally on screen. As I argued in section 2.2, previous depictions of female 'madness' and 'queerness' on screen had focused on Othering, toxicity and abuse, making the queer-coded or 'mad' characters monstrous figures and oftentimes the main antagonist of the narrative. In contrast to these portrayals, the *The Haunting of* series uses stereotypes and Othering during the first half of each season to subvert these stereotypes to reveal their problematic nature. Instead of, for example, showing Olivia only as the monster, the series paints her as an ambivalent character with good intensions who is ultimately failed by her family in that her mental illness remains largely unacknowledged which causes her suicide.

To illustrate, *The Haunting of Hill House* introduces a female protagonist who is unaware of her own issue, only rarely acknowledging her decline in mental health. She is ostracized by her family and her own thoughts because of her refusal to accept her mental illness. Her acceptance in the season finale saves her children and subsequently advocates for the benefits of an open discourse about mental illness free of judgement. Prior to that, however, the season makes it a point to film Olivia as a monstrous figure, in terms of color, frame, light and camera angle. The antagonist appears to be Olivia only for the finale to subvert this reading to reveal her being othered as the reason for her behavior and its consequences. The ghosts, with Poppy as the most noteworthy example, manifest as mouthpieces of Olivia's fear, helping her justify her outbursts and desire to keep her children safe by any means necessary. In having Poppy voice Olivia's fears, she scares Olivia into her desperate actions, thus supporting my thesis that she is a product of Olivia's own mind and represents the parts of herself she cannot accept; namely that her decline in mental health had increased to extreme extents and is cause for worry.

As for Danielle, the show purposefully juxtapositions her relationship to Jamie with her relationship to Edmund and uses a heterosexual pairing as the embodiment of the 'wrong kind of love' to illustrate that the nature of the relationship is not dictated by gender. *The Haunting of Bly Manor* also shows Danielle to be fully aware of her fears as is evident in E1. Her fears center around being seen by others; her ghosts are an expression of her inability to accept her sexual desires as well as her guilt at being different to what society constitutes as the 'norm' for women. Contrary to Olivia, Danielle's awareness extrapolates her fears as can be seen in

her reaction to Peter and Edmund. Furthermore, season 2 uses tropes prevalently featured in discourses about 'queerness'. Two of these tropes – the closet and visibility – I will discuss in more detail as they emerged as the most significant in relation to the thesis of this paper. The closet, as I argued in the analysis section, is used in the first episode to lock Danielle into it. Thus, the house as an extension of her mind, becomes her prison. Her release from the closet results in a shift in her personality. Not only does she demand an explanation and apology from Miles and Flora for having locked her in but also resumes more authority within the household as she draws boundaries and enforces them. This scene is significant as it is a metaphor for Danielle's attempt at accepting herself and openly expressing her feelings. In terms of visibility, there are two aspects to consider. First, Danielle's fear of being visible is symbolized in Edmund appearing in a mirror and looking at her with exaggeratedly large eyes in the form of headlights. Second, Danielle's character challenges norms about female homosexuality by overcoming her fears and openly living her relationship with Jamie such as lesbian characters never being shown on screen in a positive manner. *The Haunting of Bly Manor*, by having only Danielle's fears appear as monstrous but not her and allowing her sexuality to become visible contradicts these preexisting notions.

A significant distinction emerged not only in terms of the haunted house in film but also between the haunted house as a metaphor and as an extension of the protagonist. This distinction is necessary as it differentiates between the house as it mirrors the inner landscape of the protagonist – decay for a disturbed mind for example – and the house as it takes the shape of the protagonist's state of mind. Changes to that state can be observed, for example, in Hill House when it starts to decay further despite Hugh's attempts at fixing it. Furthermore, I found the haunted house as a metaphor is relegated to the sphere of literature. On screen, this metaphor is rarely used as it does not translate to visual story-telling because it is part of the inner thoughts of a character which cannot be visualized on screen easily. Film, in contrast, uses less feelings and impression and instead favors sequencing. For example, the continuous decay of Hill House is shown instead of described which makes visible a sequence of events.

Subsequently, the thesis I posed during the introduction of this paper should be expanded. While the haunted house is used as an extension of the protagonist, the haunting as an expression of abjected fear needs to be foregrounded in order to appropriately encompass all implications and the potential for this particular trope. I further conclude that the *The Haunting of* series is the first horror TV series to use this trope and establish this new category of haunted house. As I stated in the theory section of this paper, the literature review implicitly separates haunted houses into two categories: bodies in the ground and bodies in the building. However,

on the basis of my analysis, the third category 'bodies of the mind' should be added to this framework. The haunting, as I have argued, does not pertain to the houses but rather to the women living within them. As section 4 shows, a comparison of haunted houses in television allowed for the comprising of a new and third category of haunted house. While classic haunted houses are featured in *American Horror Story* and *Supernatural*, the *The Haunting of* series uses this new type of haunted houses which corresponds to the state of mind of its inhabitants. In that, this type is no longer in accordance with what the literature constitutes as a haunted house which is why argue for this framework to not only be expanded but be more distinguished and precise.

I also posed the question of how to classify the primary texts according to which type of Gothic they belong. In the theory section of this paper I raised the question whether haunted houses of contemporary origin may still be categorized as British or American Gothic, considering that, according to Goddu, the American Gothic is a genre defined by its lack of boundaries. As British Gothic relies on grandeur to evoke feelings of terror, both Hill House and Bly Manor may fit this description. In addition, as, on the surface, both houses may be classified as bodies in the building, a category prevalent in European narratives, the classification of both houses is in question. I suggest that a classification depends on whether or not the narrative is categorized as a ghost story. As I have argued, I reject this notion as my reading of the primary texts suggests that in both narratives the ghosts represent not a haunting of a building as is the case for typical haunted houses but of a person. With the sources of those fears being society's rejection of female 'madness' and 'queerness', the series is more congruent with the American Gothic than the British Gothic. According to Crow, the most noteworthy feature of the American Gothic is that it reveals that which is unaddressed as an expression of fears and desires. On the basis of this definition and considering that female 'madness' and 'queerness' are two concepts largely ignored and stigmatized by society to a point where they are denied visibility and representation on screen, both narratives should be classified as American Gothic rather than British Gothic.

Among the most noteworthy conclusions I draw from the analysis is that the *The Haunting of* series' use of color and filming techniques reiterate the series' position within the horror genre by contrasting characters in terms of wardrobe or using camera angle and motion to assign a character a label such as 'fear-inducing'. The differences between Olivia and Danielle are distinctive not only as they play different roles in their social environment but also in the way they are filmed. Olivia, for as long as her illness remains unaddressed, is filmed in a way that makes her the monster. The sample stills show that in filming Olivia's hand as it

menacingly reaches for the doorknob without context recalls other horror films of claws reaching for doorknobs. In using frames that are typical of the horror genre in general and of filming monstrous characters in particular, the audience automatically groups Olivia in with these characters. Comparing how Danielle is filmed to how Olivia is filmed, with one shot in particular catching my attention, I propose that Danielle is intended to resemble prominent final girls such as Laurie (*Halloween*) and Brooke (*AHS 1984*). Thus, it is unnecessary for the narrative to label Danielle as a final girl, as the shot-composition already assigns her that role, making her the obvious heroic character of the story and influencing the audience' response to her.

I also conclude that the show illustrates how Danielle and Olivia are othered and isolated by their families. In Olivia's case, Hugh's refusal to acknowledge or discuss her decline in mental health and his subsequent refusal to tell his children the truth about their mother, which would potentially alleviate their fears and concerns, isolates her from her family. In that, Hugh inevitably feeds into her fears of being unable to reach her children and keep them safe which is emphasized as Poppy urges Olivia: "He's taking them" (E9, 49:00). Danielle, on the other hand, is ostracized by her and Edmund's families as she is pressured to commit to a heterosexual relationship. Her wardrobe reflects her coping strategy of performative heteronormativity out of fear of being othered. By making visible Danielle and Olivia's ostracization, the show comments on the positive impact of acknowledgment and acceptance on female characters abjecting parts of themselves due to their incapability to meet society's expectations for women.

Lastly, as I indicated in the introduction, this paper did not focus on adaptation studies. However, the analysis revealed a potential for future research topics in conjunction with adaptation studies. I suggest that the *The Haunting of* series acknowledges a shift in society which allows a more inclusive and accurate portrayal of female characters and their desires and fears in that it changes the original texts in two major points: Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* sees Hugh, a man, as the perpetrator and murderer, Flanagan's Hill House uses Hugh as a loving but incapable father and Olivia as an ambivalent violent mother. Similarly, in James' *The Turn of the Screw*, the au pair's sexual identity is implied to be heteronormative while Flanagan explicitly makes Danielle a queer character. A future research project could thus use adaptation studies to analyze how these changes affect the narrative and how Flanagan's texts purposefully change the original texts to grant visibility to taboo topics.

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7 Appendix

7.1 Zusammenfassung

Die Stigmatisierung von weiblichem ‚Wahnsinn' und weiblicher ‚Queerness' reicht bis zum Fernsehen, in welchem Figuren, die als ‚wahnsinnig' oder ‚queer' charakterisiert werden, stereotyp oder als Antagonistinnen dargestellt werden. *The Haunting of* ist eine der ersten Horrorserien, die die Erwartungen einer weiblichen Protagonistin, die als psychisch krank oder ‚queer' kategorisiert werden kann, umkehrt und sie damit in einer Weise darstellt, die frei von Stigmatisierung ist.

Die vorliegende Arbeit zielt darauf ab, zu erfassen, wie Filmtechniken, Farbnutzung und Framing das Spukhaus als eine Erweiterung der Psyche der Protagonistinnen konzeptualisieren. Meine These ist demnach, dass der Spuk in Hill House und Bly Manor eine visuelle Manifestation und dementsprechend ein Stellvertreter der Ängste der Protagonistinnen ist. Eine Sichtung der zu den Themen Spukhaus, Othering, Abjektion, das Unheimliche und Darstellung von weiblichem ‚Wahnsinn' und weiblicher ‚Queerness' im zeitgenössischen Fernsehen verfügbaren Sekundärliteratur ist die Basis des Close Readings der beiden Primärtexte.

Um die Abjektion der weiblichen Figuren, die sich als ‚queer' oder psychisch krank identifizieren, sichtbar zu machen, benutzt Regisseur Mike Flanagan die Trope des Spukhauses als eine räumliche Manifestation der Psyche der jeweiligen weiblichen Protagonistin und kreiert damit einen neuen Typus des Spukhauses, welcher bis zu diesem Zeitpunkt noch nicht in der Sekundärliteratur beschrieben wird.